



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

(Reference: [Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 and Appropriation
\(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2022-2023](#))

Members:

**MR J MILLIGAN (Chair)
MR A BRADDOCK (Deputy Chair)
DR M PATERSON**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 22 AUGUST 2022

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr David Monk (Ph 620 50129)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9 am.

Appearances:

Steel, Mr Chris, Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director General, Economic Development
Starick, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Policy and Strategy

Major Projects Canberra

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer
Wark, Ms Erica, Chief Finance Officer
Power, Ms Rebecca, Project Director, CIT Campus Woden Project

Canberra Institute of Technology

Lundy, Ms Kate, Chair, CIT Board
Robertson, Ms Christine, Acting Chief Executive Officer
Whale, Mr Andrew, Executive Director, Education and Training Services
Andersen, Ms Josephine, Acting Executive Director; Strategic Projects and Industry Engagement
Tong, Mr Greg, Senior Director, Finance, CIT

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to the second day of the public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023. In the proceedings today we will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, the Education Directorate, the Community Services Directorate, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, Major Projects Canberra, and Access Canberra.

The committee also wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live.

When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses could use these words: "I will take that as a question taken on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice in the transcript.

In the first session today, we will hear from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and Major Projects Canberra. We welcome Mr Chris Steel, the Minister for Skills, and officials. I remind witnesses of the protections and

obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege. I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is in front of you. Can you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Steel: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We are not inviting opening statements, so we will now proceed straight to questions. I will start by asking a substantive; I will then open the floor to any supplementaries.

Firstly, in terms of the CIT infrastructure program, on page 145 of budget statements B, there are further costs for CIT Woden of \$1.5 million for the acquisition of land. Why is the additional cost here and not part of the overall budget for CIT major projects?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to the team at Major Projects Canberra to provide a comment. They are joining us online. CIT might also be able to provide some comment on that land acquisition. The CIT Woden campus project, of course, not only includes the construction of the new building and the building of a new campus at CIT Woden but also includes a change to other campuses, particularly with the construction of a new CIT Yurauna Centre, and the decanting of their current campus, which is in Reid. Do any officials want to make further comments on that? We can take it on notice.

Mr Edghill: Unfortunately, Chair, we can hear you very clearly, but on the minister's side the audio was not coming through.

Mr Steel: The question was in relation to the land acquisition referred to on page 145 of the CMTEEDD statements.

THE CHAIR: I will repeat the question. On page 145 of statements B, there is a cost of \$1.5 million for the further acquisition of land. Why is this an additional cost and not part of the overall budget for CIT Woden major projects?

Mr Edghill: We are just looking up the reference, but our immediate reaction is that that is something that is not associated with the CIT Woden project.

THE CHAIR: Can you confirm what it is associated with or what it was for?

Mr Edghill: We will take that on notice, Chair. We may need to confer with our colleagues at CIT.

MR BRADDOCK: When I look through the 2022-23 skills list, I note that gasfitters are listed there. I also note the ACT government's long-term trajectory regarding trying to get off gas. What is the transition plan? We are trying to get more gasfitters into the ACT in the short term, but in the long term that will be a declining occupation.

Mr Steel: Certainly, I would expect that there would still be a need for gasfitters in the ACT because gas is not going to be turned off tomorrow; there will still be a need to maintain and repair existing gas systems in houses and commercial premises across the ACT. Where there is a need for those types of occupations and skills, that will be

reflected in the skills list. We consult in relation to the skills list on a regular basis to make sure that it reflects demand in the economy for skills. It sounds like gasfitters have come up as part of that process. I will hand over to the team at Skills Canberra to talk a little bit about the process they have gone through and what sort of occupations are in demand.

Ms Arthy: I have read the privilege statement. As the minister said, we still have a need for particular occupations. With the skills needs list we go out and consult with a lot of local businesses to get their input as to what it is that we need. We also have a model that we use to look at forecasting around labour projections, in order to be able to come back with what our actual skill needs are.

We talk to a lot of our peak industry bodies. As you can imagine, there is a lot of demand for a whole range of skills at the moment, particularly in the IT construction area. We have a lot of demand in the aged care area, as well as in emerging areas like renewables.

The minister released the Skilled to Succeed strategy, in which we have identified a range of industries that we need to look at over the next five to 10 years regarding how we transition and get the skills up, and renewables will be one of those.

MR BRADDOCK: In terms of the modelling for gasfitters, does that take into account the long-term government strategy to wean off gas?

Ms Arthy: In terms of the model, I do not think we would get down to that level of detail. That announcement is fairly recent. In future years we will look at the future demand for these skills, and how to make sure that we have enough supply in the ACT to deliver the needs that we have. It is also about making sure that we have other supply coming through for the new skills that will be needed.

DR PATERSON: My question is around the \$31 million in the budget to deliver the CIT Woden campus. Given that we are in a skills shortage at the moment, has anything been done to speed up the delivery of the campus, and what are the time frames for delivery?

Mr Steel: The CIT Woden project is tracking very well. There was further investment in the budget for the project, particularly the Woden part, which is known as package 2. That responds to community feedback that we have received during the consultation process. The community told us that they would like to see a focus on good shelter being provided in the new CIT campus, particularly as it is an integrated development, together with a new transport interchange. There will be quite a number of people traversing from the interchange through the campus and into different parts of the town centre, whether that is Westfield or some of the government office accommodation there. We have certainly been reflecting those changes and updates to the design as we have gone through that iterative design process.

Now that Lendlease, the delivery partner, is on board, we are moving into more of a detailed stage for the design. We will be undertaking further consultation with the community. In fact there are community information sessions this week, where we are seeking feedback on the public realm and the latest iteration of the design concept. We need to go through that design process in order to move into the construction phase. I

will pass over to Duncan Edghill, and Rebecca Power, the project director, to talk a little bit about how the construction program is looking now that we have the delivery partner on board.

Mr Edghill: Sorry, Chair. We are having some issues at this end. I think we heard the minister pass to us.

THE CHAIR: That is correct, to provide an update on the construction program for CIT Woden.

Mr Edghill: Certainly. In relation to the question that we took on notice previously, we will still take that question on notice regarding the reference in the budget papers, but our understanding is that it relates to an internal transfer of the land from the Suburban Land Authority to the CIT itself.

In terms of the construction program at CIT Woden, we are now going as quickly as we can. A couple of months back, we signed the main works contract with Lendlease, which marked a major milestone for the project. In terms of the way that the program looks moving forward, a lot of the things that we have been doing to deliver the project as quickly as we can include undertaking various different packages of works. Construction activities on the site are underway at the moment. One of the key benefits of the work that we have already been doing, ahead of the main works contract being signed, is to allow us to get into the main works as quickly as we possibly can.

We are presently in a detailed design phase with Lendlease and the various partners that Lendlease has brought to the table. We will continue to engage with the community on elements of the design in the coming weeks and months, with a view to getting to the point where the design has been finalised and the timeline for the new temporary bus interchange is being finalised.

The new temporary bus interchange will come online for the beginning of next year. Once that happens, that will enable us, in 2023, to begin demolition of the existing bus interchange at Woden. As well as those structures coming down, the community will see excavation of the bottom level, where the basement car parking will go. We will then see the super-structure come out of the ground—the structure of the building itself. In 2024 the predominant works that we will be undertaking will be the fit-out, and everything that needs to happen inside the superstructure, with a view to the facility opening during calendar year 2025.

MS LEE: Minister, in relation to, broadly, your ministerial role and your responsibility for CIT contracts, did you have any discussions with the Chief Minister about the CIT contracts with Patrick Hollingworth and/or his related entities?

Mr Steel: I think you are aware, Ms Lee, that this matter is currently under investigation by the Integrity Commission. As such, it would be inappropriate for me to comment in relation to the contracts while they are under investigation. I think you are aware of the duties that can be applied by the Integrity Commissioner, not just on me but on other members, not to interfere in relation to their investigation. I am happy to, at a later time, provide you with some information, if that is appropriate, but it would not be appropriate right now.

MS LEE: With due respect, Minister, the questions that I am asking are about the ministerial role and your responsibility.

Mr Steel: You have specifically referenced the contracts that are under investigation.

MS LEE: Yes, and I am talking about your role as minister in that. Are you still refusing to answer those questions?

Mr Steel: I am providing you with an answer to the questions now, which is that it is inappropriate for me to comment at this time in relation to an ongoing investigation by the Integrity Commissioner.

MS LEE: Given that the reason you are not answering is that there is an ongoing investigation, can you confirm for the committee whether your role and, given that I specifically asked about your communications with the Chief Minister, that aspect, are under investigation?

Mr Steel: No, that is a question you should ask of the Integrity Commission. I will say it again: I think you are very well aware of the duties that may be applied to both me and other members of the committee in relation to interference with the Integrity Commission. On that basis I am not providing you with the information you are requesting at this point in time, because that investigation is ongoing, and I do not want to interfere in it.

MS LEE: Will you also have the same answer in relation to the ministerial direction that you signed off on Saturday?

Mr Steel: No, I am happy to talk about matters that have occurred, particularly since July, that the CIT and I have undertaken in relation to broader matters which do not go to the substance of the ongoing investigation by the commission.

DR PATERSON: I have a supplementary, Chair.

THE CHAIR: I will allow Ms Lee to clarify the last question that she asked and then I will go to Dr Paterson.

MS LEE: Thank you. Given that the minister has indicated he is happy to answer questions about the ministerial direction, Minister, I will take you to that direction. It has four points. What indeed is the role of the board if you are required to make these types of ministerial directions? Does it not indicate that you have lost confidence in the board?

Mr Steel: No. In fact I have a lot of confidence in the actions that the board have taken since July in relation to improving the financial management and accountability. They have undertaken a range of actions, some of which are reflected in the direction itself. I have also been consulting with the CIT board in relation to the direction which I made on 18 August. They have already put in place updated delegations of authority policies. They have established a new governance nominations committee to improve the governance of the CIT. I am very confident that these measures reflect the work that

the CIT is doing. It also indicates the government's expectations around the governance and financial management of the CIT going forward.

I expect that this direction will be enduring for some time. It sets out our expectations, particularly in relation to making sure that CIT respond to any advice of the procurement board, and that that is reported through to the CIT board, particularly from the CEO. We have also asked that the CIT board review its charter and policies annually to ensure appropriate governance documentation going forward. This reflects some of the work that CIT is already doing, as well as the government's expectations going forward.

THE CHAIR: Witnesses appearing via Webex, are you hearing the minister's response clearly? Is your IT working okay?

Mr Edghill: We cannot hear anything other than from the MLAs.

THE CHAIR: If the minister refers a question to a witness appearing via Webex, we may have to ask that question on your behalf, so that they can hear it.

Mr Steel: Sure.

THE CHAIR: We will go to Dr Paterson for a supplementary.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how is the CIT board getting on with delivering a nation-leading vocational education and skills program?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to the CIT board chair, if she is available, to provide some information there.

THE CHAIR: Can the CIT board chair provide some additional information on the question that Dr Paterson just asked?

Ms Lundy: Could you please repeat the question?

DR PATERSON: How is the CIT board ensuring the delivery of a nation-leading vocational education and skills program?

Ms Lundy: Thank you very much for that question. The board is working very closely with the acting CEO. The executive, which has been augmented with additional capacity over the past few months, is incredibly focused on this task. We are very mindful that the skills shortage around the nation is being experienced quite acutely here in Canberra and the region, and that means our focus remains on delivering the teaching and learning services that CIT is renowned for.

That requires incredible focus at a very difficult time, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend the executive, leadership, staff and workforce of the whole of CIT for their forbearance and their diligence, through the COVID period in particular, and for keeping CIT on track in delivering those services to our community.

MS LEE: Minister, you mentioned in your previous answer that your direction requires

CIT to provide some further reporting elements, including about procurements and the relationship with the Government Procurement Board. Does this mean that the CIT board was not doing this, or you were not satisfied with their engagement with the Government Procurement Board on how they were handling procurement?

Mr Steel: Ms Lee, I am not sure how that is a supplementary, firstly. Secondly, in relation to that—

MS LEE: I do not know how Dr Paterson's was, either.

Mr Steel: If you are asking about specific matters in relation to the board, that is obviously subject to the ongoing investigation—

MS LEE: That is not what I am asking; I am directly quoting your ministerial direction, Minister.

MR BRADDOCK: Chair, a point of order.

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK: We agreed there would be two supplementaries for each question. We are well beyond that on this line of questioning.

THE CHAIR: Given that we are only 24 minutes into the first session, we have plenty of time to run with a couple of supplementaries. I will ask Ms Lee to keep to that one supplementary for now; then we will come back to your first substantive.

MS LEE: It was in direct response, as a supplementary to the minister's answer.

THE CHAIR: In the meantime can you please refer to standing order 236 and maybe acquaint yourself with it?

MR BRADDOCK: Sure.

MS LEE: Minister, are you going to answer the question?

Mr Steel: The directions broadly reflect the obligations on CIT that are already present in the Financial Management Act. They provide further detail and also respond to the CIT's ongoing work to improve governance and financial accountability at CIT. This certainly reflects the position that we would like to see further information provided to the board going forward, particularly in relation to procurement matters and where they have diverged from advice from the procurement board.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I will go to a new substantive, in relation to JobTrainer. During 2021-22 a further \$13 million was received for JobTrainer in commonwealth grants. Is it a condition that the ACT government also matches the money you receive from the commonwealth government?

Mr Steel: There have been two rounds of JobTrainer, which is a fifty-fifty joint partnership with the Australian government to fund free training places in the ACT

across a wide variety of skill sets and qualifications. It is my understanding that there has been \$16.75 million for both JobTrainer 1 and 2, fifty-fifty matched with the commonwealth.

THE CHAIR: In relation to this financial year, 2022-23, what are you expecting in terms of federal government funding and the commitment that ACT government will give towards JobTrainer?

Mr Steel: JobTrainer 2 is likely to conclude this financial year. We are working with the new federal government on their commitments in the skills area. Of course, there is the upcoming jobs and skills summit in September, where there will be a national discussion about skills. That will go to the issue of further investment in training, particularly in TAFE training, and delivering on the federal government's commitment that they want to work with each jurisdiction to deliver fee-free training places in TAFE.

This is a new initiative, and we are expecting commonwealth funding for that. They have already initiated a consultation on that through the skills ministers meeting, and we are providing our feedback in relation to that. Of course, there is a current bill to establish Jobs and Skills Australia, the JSA. There is a current federal parliamentary inquiry into that bill. The ACT government will make a submission to that. It will establish a new institution within the skills framework and it will play a new role as well, perhaps a slightly broader role than previous organisations.

MR BRADDOCK: I noticed that, in the Engineers Australia submission to the budget, they asked that all engineers be included on the ACT critical skills list. Have you had engagement with Engineers Australia about what professions need to be included in that list?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Skills Canberra to provide some feedback on their engagement.

THE CHAIR: The minister is calling on Skills Canberra to provide some feedback on the question Mr Braddock has just asked.

Ms Arthy: Perhaps I will start; then I might be able to hand over. The critical skill needs list that you are referring to is the skilled migration list. We take a lead from what the commonwealth list is. We have not had, in the ACT, direct discussions on the engineers list. However, we have talked to the Chief Engineer in the ACT government about the future needs around engineers. Those discussions are ongoing because, as you can appreciate, there is not a simple answer to being able to deliver a lot of engineers quickly. We are working very closely with our Chief Engineer to look at what we can do with our universities, and working with the commonwealth government around skilled migration to get the engineers we need in the ACT.

MR BRADDOCK: Do you apply a gender lens to that process? I note that the unemployment rate for migrant female engineers is three times the rate of any other migrant male engineer. Do you apply any gender focus to how you are attracting engineers into the ACT?

Ms Arthy: We do not actually do the engineer attraction. We do not do the actual work.

That is usually done by the industries themselves. We are responsible for making sure that we have a pathway once the engineers, or those in any other occupation, are attracted, to be able to come into the ACT and go through the process as quickly as possible.

Mr Steel: The skills needs list included new qualifications earlier this year for this financial year. Of particular note is that a diploma of engineering—advanced trade was added to the list. Usually, that has come about as a result of consultation that has occurred on the skills needs list. There is also, of course, the critical skills list, which is used for the skilled migration pathways, which has a slightly different set of qualifications but it is somewhat similar in some respects. We might be able to take on notice what specific engagement they have had with Engineers Australia.

MR BRADDOCK: I am keen to understand why there would be a difference between those two lists in terms of skills. I am sure there is a logical reason but I am curious to know.

Mr Steel: The skills list is used to inform where government subsidies for training are directed, which is really about training people in Australia. In Canberra, for skills needs, a slightly different list applies for the skilled migration pathways, which is probably narrower, in order to make sure that we are focusing only on those really critical skills needs which cannot be met within the ACT's existing population, so that we are putting Australians first in terms of making sure they are skilled up to work in local jobs. If we cannot find skilled workers to work in those jobs, those occupations find themselves on the critical skills needs list, which means we might be able to attract skilled migration to be able to fill those places.

Ms Arthy: The other difference is that the skills needs list is purely focused on vocational education and training, whereas the critical skills needs list also takes into account university qualifications. That is what the difference is, and for the critical skills needs list it has been migration. We can only put items on the list for the ACT that are on the commonwealth list. There are a few new nuances in there about how things go on and off, but the fundamental difference is that our list is for vocational education and training, whereas the critical skills needs list for migration covers university qualifications.

DR PATERSON: My question is in relation to table 3 on page 142—the accountability indicators for the July to June financial year. The target of subject enrolments for 2021-22 is 108,000 but the estimated outcome is 94,000. Can you provide an explanation as to why there is an estimated shortfall in enrolments?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to CIT to answer that question.

Ms Robertson: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for the question on enrolments. I will refer that to Mr Andrew Whale.

THE CHAIR: I am not sure whether our witnesses via Webex are hearing the questions from MLAs or visiting ministers. Can you confirm whether you can hear me?

Mr Whale: I can definitely hear you.

THE CHAIR: Can I ask Dr Paterson to repeat her question? Which official would you like to respond?

Ms Robertson: Mr Andrew Whale.

DR PATERSON: I was interested in table 3 on page 142 around the targets for subject enrolments and how the estimated outcome for the year 2021-22 was less than the target. Could I get an explanation for why there are fewer subject enrolments?

Mr Whale: A combination of three different major factors impacted on enrolments, and some of them still are impacting. Obviously, there is COVID and the impact that has had on students being able to enrol, given whatever individual circumstances they have had in their own life and how they are managing their work. There is also an ongoing issue with COVID that we are getting now in regard to work placements, which is a critical part of training and assessment for vocational education—the ability for trainees to be in the workplace to be assessed. I refer to the difficulties that a lot of businesses have had in the last couple of years with COVID, and the capacity, particularly in areas of hairdressing—they are very small venues—to have students in to do the workplace assessment. There is an ongoing impact that we are rolling through. It has impacted vocational education across the country.

There has been a historically large number of training packages being upgraded. That is again being driven nationally. That has impacted, with a lot of courses—around 60 to 70—significantly changing. The ability to continue training some of those students involves getting new courses up and running—stopping enrolment in the last course that is now defunct and moving into the new course.

Again, it is a national thing that we are managing, along with every other vocational education provider. That has had an impact on enrolments as well. There has been an ongoing issue that is COVID related—the ongoing emotional wellbeing of people in the community. Particularly in some of our more vulnerable student cohorts, the feedback that we are getting from the community is that they have been reluctant to enrol in studies or do things in addition to what they need to do on a day-to-day basis, and there is the impact that that is having.

Finally, particularly last year, with respect to a lot of school students that move into vocational education and training to do certain short courses, schools were focused on getting students through the school curriculum and the education processes within schools. There was a significant drop in a lot of short courses. Students were not coming to CIT or CIT was unable to deliver those on site at schools because of the COVID focus.

DR PATERSON: Given that we are probably in this COVID situation indefinitely, what is CIT doing to work with students and prospective students around ensuring that students feel safe attending classes or have the facilities to go online?

Mr Whale: Since COVID began we have significantly increased our move to digital online learning. Again, there is limitation in some areas, particularly in some of the trades, especially in areas where there needs to be hands-on training assessment. It is

not like some areas of, say, university, where everything can just be moved online and you can work remotely. In vocational education and training it is different, and there are limits to what we can do online. But there has been a significant digital uplift regarding our ability to do that. That continues, and it will be a major focus as part of the technology upgrade that we will be bringing to the Woden campus, through our campus initiatives.

We have a very large, strong and dedicated team of welfare support here at CIT that work across all areas supporting not only students but also teachers to support students. It is about having that one-on-one situation: “What’s your situation? How can we assist and how can we move you along your educational journey?” That has been ongoing and increasing. We are working on that directly with the students. Also, in some of those areas, including the Indigenous population, we are working with the community outside the direct interface with students—what supports we can provide and how we can integrate ourselves more into the community, to find more understandings and more partnerships. That is a critical way forward.

MS LEE: I note that we have present at the hearing the acting CEO; welcome. As a result of the CEO being stood down, Minister, can you please confirm whether the CEO is still being paid, and for how long has she been stood down?

Mr Steel: As you are aware, Ms Lee, matters of employment are a matter for CIT and the board.

MS LEE: Can someone else answer my question?

Mr Steel: They are a territory authority, so I do not have a direct role in relation to the CEO’s employment. I will hand over to Kate Lundy, the chair of the board, if she wants to provide any comment.

MS LEE: The question was: is the CEO that has been stood down currently being paid, and for how long is she stood down?

Ms Lundy: Thank you for that question. I can confirm that the current CEO is on paid leave. The leave is directed leave, directed by the board for the duration of the inquiries and investigations, and that is continuing.

MS LEE: Can the chair confirm whether the CEO readily accepted that decision from the board?

Ms Lundy: I do not think it is appropriate to comment on what the CEO thought and felt, but there was agreement about that leave at the time. I can also confirm that the leave has been extended to the end of this month. We will consider, as we do each month, that continuing leave. From the board’s position, we are very mindful that procedural fairness needs to apply, and we are doing that in this case.

MS LEE: Finally, with respect to the acting CEO’s appointment, how long is that for?

Ms Lundy: The acting CEO’s appointment is for the period of time for which she is required, up to a period of six months.

THE CHAIR: I am looking at the 2022-23 skills funding. A record investment of \$126.3 million in funding will be provided for apprenticeships, traineeships and other vocational education activities, but it has not actually listed any new initiatives. Are there any new initiatives or is this just highlighting the normal recurrent funding that is being spent, plus the additional capital to finance the new CIT Woden infrastructure overspend?

Mr Steel: No, it highlights the substantial investment that we have made, particularly through programs like JobTrainer—additional new programs to support fee-free places for students to train in a range of different skills areas that are needed by the economy.

We are continuing to make record investments in vocational education and training and, over the forward years, we are looking forward to trying to reach agreement with the commonwealth on further initiatives to strengthen vocational education and training. I mentioned the potential national partnership in relation to fee-free TAFE training places. Of course, we continue to discuss the future national skills agreement as well, which could see substantial new investment in vocational education and training in the territory. Those are ongoing discussions that will be informed by the jobs and skills summit, bilateral discussions and skills ministers meetings ahead.

We are expecting to see further investment in this area, because we are in a skills and workforce crisis at the moment. There are, as the budget outlook outlines, more jobs available in the labour market than there are people to take them up. It is not just a skills shortage; it is a workforce shortage that we face. We will need to make sure that we continue to invest in skills to support economic growth going forward, including in those areas identified by the Chief Minister in Canberra Switched On, the economic development priorities and Skilled to Succeed, our skills and workforce agenda in the ACT.

We have outlined a range of different areas in construction and the caring industries, the experience industries and in digital IT and cyber, where we need to work with all of those industries to develop new courses. We are doing that, including through our industry advisory group, to understand what those barriers are and where we need to be moving into new areas. CIT are also looking at how they are working with industry to develop new courses in new, emerging areas, and skills needed in the economy.

A great example of that is the electric vehicle training laboratory that was officially launched in May at the CIT, which is delivering cutting-edge training. It is not available anywhere else in Australia, in terms of some of the skill sets that they are providing through that training. We want to move into new areas like that as we go forward.

That, of course, requires investment—by training providers themselves and by the industry. We are keen to work with the industry on co-investment in some of these areas, particularly around workforce attraction and continued investment by the government in funding training and apprenticeships in our existing programs. The User Choice Australian apprenticeship program is demand driven. As more demand is created in the economy for those skills, and we see more apprentices come into training, we will, of course, fund those apprentices. We have seen a very significant increase in the number of apprentices who are undertaking training over recent years, which is absolutely

fantastic and is much needed by industry.

THE CHAIR: In relation to your consultation with training providers, are you communicating with independent RTOs, as well as CIT?

Mr Steel: Yes. The skills industry advisory council which we have established has representation from a range of different industries and RTOs, both public and private, and ITECA, the independent tertiary peak body, as well. We are engaging with them in relation to a whole range of things, the implementation of a skills and workforce agenda being one of those. We will continue to engage with them on that. There is also consultation on skills needs—critical skills or those other important parts of the training system.

THE CHAIR: Is there any indicative amount of funding that might go towards independent RTOs to provide these new courses that might be established through the future national jobs and skills summit? What funding is coming from the federal government as well as the ACT?

Mr Steel: I do not want to pre-empt the outcomes of the summit. Certainly, there will be an opportunity; I am sure ITECA will be represented there, and representatives of the independent RTO sector. They can speak for themselves at that summit about what they would like to see. Certainly, we are keen to hear from industry about what is required, particularly in those key economic development priority areas that I have outlined, about what sorts of measures would assist in terms of getting the workforce that they need, and we are open to all of those ideas.

I will hand over to Kareena Arthy to talk a little bit about the process of consultation that we are doing with them.

Ms Arthy: There are multiple layers in terms of the question that you were asking. As the minister said, we consult on several levels. One is with our skills industry advisory council. The terms of reference for that are on the website. Because we are in contract with about 75 private RTOs, we work with them quite readily in terms of what the needs are.

Coming back to your question around funding that is available, the process normally is that we consult. We have the skills needs list which sets the level of subsidy that the government is willing to pay for a particular course. We then have what is called Skilled Capital. It comes under our Skilled Capital round, which means we put out, either through an expression of interest or through direct application, for private RTOs and CIT to compete to deliver the training that we have set at the subsidies that we have set. In 2022-23 the budget for Skilled Capital is \$2½ million, and that is open to both CIT and private RTOs.

As the minister said, we also have very strong demand for User Choice. The budget for User Choice in 2022-23 is just under \$15 million. If private RTOs are delivering apprenticeships and traineeships, they get access to that as well. With respect to the jobs and skills summit, if there is anything new that we do not have on our list that comes out of that, it will be a matter of us updating our list, updating our subsidy list, and including that in our Skilled Capital and User Choice subsidies.

THE CHAIR: With that subsidy list, what percentage is independent RTOs and what percentage is CIT?

Ms Arthy: From what I understand—and I may need to confirm this at another point—CIT receives about 50 per cent of the User Choice budget and about 14 per cent of Skilled Capital—or that could be \$14 million. Can I take that on notice?

THE CHAIR: Yes, absolutely.

Ms Arthy: I will confirm the figures. I am not sure whether it is a percentage or whether it is absolute numbers. I will get back to you very shortly.

THE CHAIR: I would rather have an accurate recording than an estimate.

Ms Arthy: Yes. I will get the team to send me the information, and I will confirm that shortly.

MR BRADDOCK: I would like an update on what changes are being made to the governance framework for CIT in light of the events that have happened this year.

Mr Steel: I have already outlined a few of those, but I will hand over to Kate Lundy, the Chair of the CIT Board, to outline what changes the board has initiated.

THE CHAIR: I will repeat the question for your benefit, Ms Lundy. The minister referred it on to you. What changes have been made to the CIT governance framework this year?

Ms Lundy: A number of changes have taken place at the CIT board to strengthen the governance of the board. They include the creation of a new governance nominations committee, to be chaired by our deputy chair, Natalie Howson. We have appointed two additional board members to that committee. We have also appointed two additional board members to the audit committee. We have renewed the charters and renewed both charters for those subcommittees and continued to work very diligently to strengthen the processes of the board.

The other substantive piece of work that we have done is to adopt new financial delegations for CIT. These financial delegations place far greater restrictions on the limits, if you like, of the delegations across CEO and executive level. We have done this, and it accords with the directions we have received from the minister in recent times, to strengthen both the financial delegations of the board and the governance structures of the board.

I would like to add that the board has worked extremely hard on getting into shape. We understand that the minister is looking for immediate action, and he has received it, as far as these measures go. I am really proud of the efforts of the whole board and the organisation in responding to these challenges. It has been a challenging time, and we have been doing a lot to get the board into terrific shape.

MR BRADDOCK: Are there any future changes planned but not yet implemented, Ms

Lundy?

Ms Lundy: We have a program of work for strengthening governance. We will continue to work through that. Obviously, as time rolls on, we are very keen to make sure that the processes of the board, the information we receive et cetera, run smoothly, and that is working in partnership with the executive of CIT. I am very impressed with the goodwill that is across the organisation and how the board is working with the executive.

MR BRADDOCK: Can you please provide more clarity about what exactly needs to be done to improve the governance framework, that you are planning to do?

Ms Lundy: Part of the challenge is making sure that the board receives the information it needs to provide the assurances and accountability both to the minister and to the community here in the ACT. The information that we receive across financial matters, across policy-related matters and across program delivery has always been of good quality. The board is very interested in how we implement a program of scrutiny through the calendar year, for example, on different aspects of CIT.

The best way to describe it is that the board will take a trusted, verified approach—although we have had to strengthen that trusted, verified approach, given what has happened recently. We will be requesting specific information through the executive to the board to allow for the level of scrutiny, and therefore the assurance, that the minister is seeking.

MS LEE: Minister, you and the board chair have now spoken at length about some of the governance changes that have taken place. Does it not concern you that, despite all of the evidence that you have both provided this morning, we still see a board where the chair currently was the deputy chair over the last couple of years? Does that really provide confidence to the public about governance changes on the board of the CIT?

Mr Steel: The chair has moved on. He moved on, on 30 June, and we have a new chair. I am very confident, because of the actions that Ms Lundy has outlined about what she has done as the new chair of the board, in relation to strengthening governance and financial accountability of the CIT.

Natalie Howson has been appointed as the deputy chair of the board. She brings considerable experience. That has certainly been welcomed, and we will continue to work with the board to oversee those improvements.

MS LEE: Did you have any discussions with the current chair about her role as deputy chair over the last couple of years?

Mr Steel: If you are referring to the contracts, I have been very clear that there is an investigation underway, so I will not be able to provide the information that you are requesting there, Ms Lee—

MS LEE: That is not what I said.

Mr Steel: if that is what you are talking about.

THE CHAIR: Just for clarification.

Mr Steel: Of course, I have met with the board on a number of occasions to talk with them about what they are up to.

MS LEE: Have you spoken to the current chair—I am just repeating the question—about her role as deputy chair over the last couple of years and what her responsibilities were?

Mr Steel: I continue to have discussions with the chair about how we can improve the financial management and accountability of the CIT and improve the operations of the board in her role as chair.

DR PATERSON: My question is in relation to Woden Community Council's budget submission. They made two recommendations in this area. One was to plan the CIT to be a major contributor to the social and cultural heart of the town centre. Recommendation 8 was to plan the greening of the town centre. I am interested to know how CIT's place in Woden is being considered.

Mr Steel: The designs that we have released today for community consultation, including the community information session, demonstrate the benefit of having this integrated project. We are not just building a new CIT campus; we are building a new transport interchange. Also, through this process, we are building brand-new public spaces throughout Woden town centre, including a new pedestrian boulevard connecting the interchange through the campus into the rest of Woden.

The benefit of us undertaking that project ourselves and doing it in a location which is in the heart of the town centre is pretty obvious. When we originally set about coming up with a design and the concepts for a new CIT campus, we saw the obvious benefit of building that on the current site, which is a prominent one in the town centre, and the obvious benefit also of upgrading the existing interchange. If we had built it on a different site, we would not have the benefit of building a new interchange and we would not have the great integration and connection through the town centre.

Of course, we also wanted to make sure that, as a government, we were taking control of developing the new public spaces, so that they were functional and really delivered a fantastic quality of design with the community. We can do that through the consultation, and that is part of the consultation that we are doing at the moment.

We heard from the community that they were concerned about safety in the current interchange. It is a bit of a dark place and hidden away. We want to try and open that up, while still providing good shelter. That has been a big part of the feedback, as well as ensuring that we have a fantastic integrated campus with good quality public spaces. It is a bit of a concrete jungle in the existing interchange and in that part of eastern Woden. We saw the opportunities to have much more canopy cover being delivered. We are trying to get to our target of 30 per cent canopy cover by putting in plantings which are appropriate for the location and that make it a great, welcoming place to study and visit.

There will be further activation, particularly at the ground-floor level, with a café, and there is the opportunity to demonstrate, through some of the transparent windows on the ground-floor level, the hands-on training being delivered at CIT, including a hairdresser, for students who are undertaking training in hairdressing.

We are planning, as part of the designs which are out for consultation now, to develop a new northern plaza—a new green space within the town centre—which will also be a place where we will have public toilets, secure bike parking and, hopefully, it will connect with the further development of the Matilda Street car park in the future.

We are also looking at a new western plaza area, which is a plaza that is connected with the new youth foyer. Again, it would be another place for improved canopy cover, and an opportunity to have some multigenerational play area spaces delivered in the centre of the town centre.

We are really excited about these new designs that have been released. In particular, I am pleased to announce that there will be a large 572-square-metre multi-use hall developed as part of the Woden CIT project, which we think will cater for a range of different events both by the CIT and potentially by other organisations that want to undertake events in the heart of Woden.

I will hand over to Rebecca Power, the project director, and the team, to see whether they want to add anything further.

Mr Edghill: Thank you, Minister. We apologise in advance if we are a little bit repetitive because of the audio issues. Certainly, in terms of the design work which the team is undertaking at the moment, there is a lot of time and effort going into working with our colleagues in the CIT to ensure that we are designing learning and teaching spaces not only for today's needs but also for a generation to come. Equally, there is as much attention going into what the project will mean from an urban realm perspective, because we are very conscious that the project is doing many things. It is delivering a world-class teaching facility but it is also very significantly going to contribute to the rejuvenation of the Woden town centre.

Part of the work at the moment is working through what is the optimal balance between what is happening within the CIT facility itself, how it interacts with what we are calling the east-west boulevard, which is effectively the boulevard from the new public transport interchange—which, of course, represents part of the project—into the town square itself and then how that interrelates with what is happening on the roof and outside spaces, for example.

A big part of the design end—for example, in looking at the teaching spaces within the facility itself—is looking at how that can add to the permeability between the new campus building and what is happening on the outside to enliven the space around the campus, not just focusing within the four walls. I apologise if I have misheard, but I might pass to Rebecca Power, the project director, to add some colour to that.

Ms Power: We have been doing a lot of work to integrate the external environment with the internal environment, particularly taking on feedback from the Woden Valley Community Council. One of the key starting points for that has been to bring our First

Nations peoples into that discussion, so we have been working with Balarinji and Yerrabingin, through Lendlease and through our technical advisers, Aras.

Both of those areas have also been working very closely with our broader First Nations peoples here in the ACT, particularly with our Ngunnawal people and our youth. Recently we held a design jam, which, again, was focusing on the external environment and bringing in appropriate Indigenous plantings and so forth, but also on bringing the inherent country into that landscape. Part of that is to create a welcoming space in the middle of the town centre, to bring that landscaping back in and tree canopy coverage, and to look at how that connects out of our east-west boulevard, as Duncan articulated, to Arabanoo Park and through the town park into the town square.

We are looking at different spaces so that they can be used by both the students of CIT and the broader community. Those spaces will include technology access so that you can sit down and plug your device in and so forth. It is like following a high-level stream, with eddies and fast walk-throughs. So if you are just going straight to the interchange, you can pass through, but to absorb and really enjoy the green space, they are creating spaces in and around there. As the minister, I think, alluded to—apologies for the audio—we have a YourSay consultation going out shortly for the community to really focus on the western end of our east-west boulevard and the different intergenerational activity spaces that we will have over there for gathering and whatever else they need to do.

DR PATERSON: I attended a community forum a few months ago where Westfield Woden were presenting. They described light rail, CIT and the bus interchange as a game changer for Woden. I am wondering how the government is working with local business—not only big business, as in Westfield Woden, the Hellenic Club and the Southern Cross Club, for example, but also smaller businesses in Woden—to ensure that this is a collective game changer.

Mr Steel: Thank you. I was not able to attend that meeting, but I did listen in and I heard that comment made. I think it reflects the work, with public projects acting as a catalyst for further investment and regeneration of private investment in the town centre. We are certainly aware that there is a lot of private investment in other sites around the CIT campus. We also want to make sure that we are collaborating closely with the property owners around the place to ensure that there is a good connection between the new campus and those locations so that they can be complementary developments.

We have been having those conversations with Westfield and Scentre Group, with the Hellenic Club, who are also proposing a major redevelopment of their site, and also with other developers around the place—Hindmarsh and the like. We have formalised that discussion through the establishment of a community reference group for the project, which includes a number of community organisations and community representatives but also a lot of those key stakeholders in the Woden town centre, including the Hellenic Club and Scentre Group, so that we can formalise those discussions as we move through this detailed design period and so that they can have input into that.

Scentre Group owns what I call the David Jones car park, but I think that is formally known as the Neptune Street car park, directly next to the current interchange and the

future CIT building. They will no doubt have comments to make about what their future plans for that site are and how it might integrate with the new CIT campus. I will hand over to the team, if they want to provide any more comment on the engagement with some of the other stakeholders in the town centre.

Mr Edghill: In addition to meeting with all the stakeholders as we move through the early design stages of the project, as we move into the construction phase proper there will be a program of ensuring that we are working very closely with surrounding businesses and so forth, as we do with all of our major projects. Again, we apologise if the minister already mentioned this, but we are very conscious that we are not designing an inward-focused building in its own island.

Of course the teaching and learning spaces are important, but we are also very cognisant that what we are doing needs to fit into the broader community. It is for that reason that we are spending a lot of time talking to surrounding businesses, large and small, but we are also, through the design process, thinking about not only what happens with our building itself but how it may interact with others in the vicinity.

For example, obviously on that east-west boulevard that we were talking about before there are ground-level retail spaces, not in the ACT government facility and Grand Central Towers across the road, but we are building and designing and thinking about what is happening in that broader area. I think I may have heard the minister mention the Neptune Street car park. Again, the design process that we are working through is in conjunction with the Scentre Group and others, thinking about what is happening on that side of the facility as well.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: A couple of clarifications: firstly, in that community hall you are proposing, will there be kitchen facilities accompanying that, because the ability to make and prepare food is important for some community groups?

Mr Steel: I just want to clarify as well that it is a 575-metres-squared floor space proposed for that new hall at the centre of the CIT building. Of the types of courses that will be delivered by CIT in the new campus, hospitality will be part of that. We are expecting that there will be state-of-the-art simulated learning environments—that is, kitchens—provided as part of the new campus. We want to encourage catering by our CIT students, to provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate the skills that they are learning at the centre. You might be familiar with the current hospitality facilities at Reid, which are ageing. I guess we are hoping to have that same opportunity here as well. So there will be an opportunity for the CIT students to provide and deliver their food through the new campus to the broader public. I will hand over to the team and MPC to talk a little bit about what the hall will do, and those facilities.

Ms Power: Thank you, Minister. I think I heard correctly. You were referring to the simulation kitchen, which does accompany the hall, so, yes, we do have that facility. We also have the training bar that is associated with the CIT's hospitality environment, which is to serve not just alcohol but also coffee and so forth. The multipurpose floor also opens out onto a terrace to the north, which is available for the students but also for the other spill-out from that multipurpose space. It leads into the student commons,

again to increase that permeability. The space itself will have a higher ceiling, for functionality, and it also will have dual connectivity through that level, from the northern through to the southern side, further activating visually from the Neptune Street car park site.

MR BRADDOCK: Sorry, another clarification: will it be suitable as a live music venue as well? Will it be zoned as an entertainment precinct?

Ms Power: I cannot speak to the zoning per se, but with the venue itself we are trying to design to make it so that it is able to be utilised by the broader CIT student community, including their music division.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

MS LEE: I note that the former chair of the CIT board was, and presumably still is, a partner at KPMG. I also note that during his tenure as chair there were a number of contracts between CIT and KPMG for consulting work. Can you provide any clarification, Minister or the current chair of the CIT board, about those contracts?

Mr Steel: That is a matter for CIT. I will ask Kate Lundy to answer, to the extent that she can, on that one.

Ms Lundy: Thank you for the question. I will take that question on notice to ensure that I give accurate information back to the committee. My understanding is that any perceived or real conflict of interest was managed by the former chair, but I will take it on notice to get you a formal answer.

MS LEE: Just as a follow-up then: in relation to the management of any real or perceived conflict, can you please outline for the committee what the process and policy is?

Ms Lundy: Yes, I can. The process is that all members of the board declare their interests and that if a perceived or real interest comes up on the board then those board members will recuse themselves from the business relating to that matter.

MS LEE: While you are providing the answer to that first question taken on notice, can I ask you to also take on notice to provide to the committee the board minutes where those contracts were discussed and board members recused themselves from those decisions?

Ms Lundy: I will take that question on notice.

MS LEE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Page 137 of budget statements B identifies a review and strengthening of CIT's governance framework for 2022-23. Is this in response to the current CIT contracting issues?

Mr Steel: Do you want to comment on that one, Ms Lundy?

Ms Lundy: Sorry; can you repeat that question?

THE CHAIR: Yes, sure. Page 137 of budget statements B identifies a review and strengthening of CIT's governance framework for 2022-23. Is this in response to CIT's contracting issues?

Ms Lundy: I think it is a general response. Obviously, those issues have had a sharp focus. We are not able to discuss them today at all because they are subject to investigations, but I think there is an opportunity here, given Woden CIT campus and the nature of the modern challenge in the skills shortage that we are facing. It is timely to strengthen governance arrangements across the CIT, regardless of all of those factors.

THE CHAIR: When will this be completed and what is the focus on?

Ms Lundy: We have already responded to questions relating to the focus on strengthening the governance frameworks of the board and putting in place financial delegation restrictions. Both of those things have been progressed by the board, to date.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS LEE: Ms Lundy, what role does the board strategy and governance adviser, Cathy Hudson, play in relation to this review?

Ms Lundy: Sorry; which position are you referring to?

MS LEE: There is a board strategy and governance adviser, as I understand it: Cathy Hudson.

Mr Whale: Ms Hudson's employment with CIT finished approximately 18 months ago, so that role does not formally exist at the moment.

MS LEE: Sorry; can I just confirm that you just said that role does not formally exist anymore?

Mr Whale: Sorry; could you repeat the question?

MS LEE: I am just asking you to confirm, because I am having a bit of trouble hearing, that Ms Hudson had finished up 18 months ago and that the role no longer exists?

Mr Whale: I apologise. I did not hear the first part of the question again.

THE CHAIR: Minister, do you—

Mr Steel: We can take it on notice, yes.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS LEE: All right. So will you take that on notice?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Steel: Yes.

MS LEE: I just wanted to get that clarification.

Ms Lundy: Can I offer an answer? I think the answer is that Cathy Hudson's employment finished up, as Mr Whale said, approximately 18 months ago. But we do have an executive member focused on strategy and we also have a secondment focused on governance at the moment. That position started in July.

MS LEE: July, as in last month?

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS LEE: Okay. What role does that executive play in the review?

Ms Lundy: As part of the general uplift in governance of the board and the organisation, the executive supports that activity.

MR BRADDOCK: I can see that architectural building and surveying technicians are in the 2022-23 skills list. However, CIT has not offered certificates or diplomas in these professions for a number of years. I am just interested to know: have we got that connection happening from the CIT course offerings to the skills list? Is that happening?

Ms Arthy: Sorry; are you referring to the ACT skills needs list or the skilled migration and critical skills list?

MR BRADDOCK: The ACT skills list.

Ms Arthy: Okay. I will need to take on notice who delivers that training in the ACT, because it could be being done by a private training provider, not CIT. CIT does not normally deliver every form of training. If we have private providers who are delivering then they are the ones that are delivering. I will take on notice who delivers that training in the ACT.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

DR PATERSON: My question relates to figure 1, the vocational education and training and graduate outcomes for 2021, on page 141. That table shows that over 80 per cent of CIT graduates are employed after training. But when you look at the non-employed before training and employed after training, it goes down to only 50 per cent. I am just wondering what CIT is doing to ensure that people who study at CIT who have not been employed before are supported to reach employment after their education.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to CIT to make some comments there. Generally speaking, we tend to see more vulnerable cohorts of people undertaking training through our public provider, CIT. In recognition of that, certainly through JobTrainer 1, we provided funding for CIT to deliver extra support, wraparound support, around trainees to make sure that they could complete their training successfully.

This is also a conversation that we are having with the commonwealth about the delivery of the fee-free TAFE training initiative. When that was rolled out in Victoria, the Victorian government also looked very closely at making sure that they had the supports there for that group. It is not just about providing the training subsidy, even if it is free to undertake training. Some people face additional barriers in their lives to being able to undertake training and need a little bit of extra support. You have seen that through the way that we have targeted JobTrainer. I expect that we will also be looking at how we can do that in the future, with any future subsidy and fee-free training initiatives.

Ms Robertson: I understand that the survey results that you are referring to are the results from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. According to the 2021 student outcome survey, those employed or in further training made up 92 per cent of CIT graduates, as opposed to 84.7 per cent of TAFE nationally, which is a strong outcome. To talk a little bit more about, that I will hand over to Andrew Whale, our Executive Director, Education and Training Services, who manages this area on behalf of CIT.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whale, have you heard the response so far or do you need Dr Paterson to repeat the question?

DR PATERSON: I will just repeat the question. Are you able to hear me, Mr Whale?

Mr Whale: Yes; sorry. I did hear your question. I have heard most of the response, but I may repeat some of it, to be clear. Whilst it is a low number on that graph, we are significantly ahead of the rest of the nation in regard to TAFE and other government providers. It is a national issue, but we do have a range of solutions at CIT that are having an impact.

We try, in most of our course areas, to connect employers with students. That sometimes occurs in the actual classroom or the workshop, or in some cases workshops. Training assessments are done on site, where students who may not have previously been linked will have firsthand experience with an employer and gain that experience. Through those workplace assessments, which in many of our courses are fundamental to graduate outcomes, there is again this linkage. We hold information nights in many of our areas, where we link students to employers.

The other point about that is that we have a fantastic array of teachers that work across CIT in all areas and all disciplines. Many of those, the vast majority, have direct contact with the industries that they teach in. Many are actually working in the industry and working with CIT at the same time, to bring that firsthand experience from that industry situation. So that is also providing direct links in understanding and connections for students to their employment potential, going forward.

MS LEE: Minister or Ms Lundy, just going back to the board strategy and governance adviser, in the previous answer you mentioned that Ms Hudson's employment finished up about 18 months ago and that there was an executive appointed last month. Can you

please confirm: in between Ms Hudson finishing up 18 months ago and the appointment last month, was there anyone acting in that role? If so, what was their role and responsibility in relation to procurement issues for CIT?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Ms Lundy.

Ms Lundy: Thank you very much. I am going to ask Mr Whale to respond to that question.

Mr Whale: We had a number of executives who took on the functions that Ms Hudson was performing in supporting the board, coordinating secretariat functions and providing governance advice and support to the chief executive and the board. Their role in procurement was not particularly significant; they were just part of the executive team and, if they were part of a contract process, they were engaged in that process. But there was no fundamental role for those positions in procurement activity.

MS LEE: Who is that role appointed by?

Mr Whale: The CEO.

MS LEE: Okay. Was that last appointment undertaken by the CEO that is currently stood down or the current acting CEO?

Ms Lundy: The appointment that was made for the governance officer was an appointment made by the board.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MS LEE: So it was by the board and not the CEO. Was that a correction?

Ms Lundy: The CEO was on leave when that appointment was made.

MS LEE: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Given that the time is 10.30, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Minister Steel and officials for their attendance so far today. I look forward to continuing this hearing and testimony after a 30-minute recess. To any witnesses leaving at this time who may have taken any questions on notice: could you please provide answers to the committee secretary within five working days.

Hearing suspended from 10.30 to 11 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to this session of the public hearings on estimates for 2022-23. In this session we will continue to hear from Minister Steel and officials. As there are potentially new officials present, I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Could you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement. As we have already started this session, we will not have opening statements right now. I would like to hand over to Ms Arthy, who would like to make some clarifications to answers that she previously gave to some questions.

Ms Arthy: Thank you, Chair. It is in relation to two questions that I was asked this morning. One was around consultation with Engineers Australia. I can confirm that we did talk to Engineers Australia and they requested that mechanical engineering go onto the critical skills needs list. We did that, after consultation with Engineers Australia.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Arthy: The other question I was asked was around shares that CIT would get for User Choice and Skilled Capital. The figures that I was quoting, around the 50 per cent mark for User Choice and a 14 or 15 per cent CIT share for Skilled Capital, were historical figures and do not include the JobTrainer figures. So I will take that on notice and come back with up-to-date figures on the CIT share for User Choice and Skilled Capital. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I will start with a substantive on space industry skills. The ACT is already home to several leading space industry companies, as well as hosting the Australian headquarters of several international ones. We hear from industry that there is a large workforce gap when it comes to so-called “space tradies”—that is, people with vocational and trade training who can build antenna systems, fabricate rocket bodies and tune radio frequency devices. Companies will look elsewhere unless this gap is filled in the ACT, so is the government engaging with industry on these issues, and how? What feedback have you received so far?

Mr Steel: Yes, we are. As part of Skilled to Succeed, the ACT skills and workforce agenda, we identified technology industries as being an important priority area, building on our extensive knowledge base capabilities in the ACT in space, cybersecurity, renewables and digital technologies. As part of the implementation of this agenda, we are now undertaking a deeper level of engagement on industry-specific plans. I will hand over to Ms Arthy to provide some further information about our engagement, particularly with the space industry.

Ms Arthy: Thank you, Minister. As the minister said, we are now in the early stages of planning to do some fairly deep engagement with different industries that are in particular demand. The four that we are starting with are construction, IT, the experience industries—such as tourism and accommodation—and the care industries. They are going to be our four focus areas. In terms of space, under the economic development portfolio we are actually developing a space strategy, so those questions can be directed to the Minister for Economic Development. Given that I am working on that as well, I can talk more generally about the skills side of that. We hear from the industry. We work with the universities—particularly the ANU and UNSW—and, as you mentioned, we have a lot of space companies here in Australia.

There is a meeting next Friday with all the businesses to talk about the future of space. Skills has to be one of the major focus areas. We know that it is not a Canberra-unique issue, in terms of skills shortages and the types of skills that are needed. We know it is not even an Australian problem; it is an international issue. We know that space agencies and leaders in space around the world are thinking, “How do we actually skill?”

When you look at the type and how fast it changes, we really do need to focus on the

main skills. We know what the ANU is good at, we know what UNSW is good at, but we also need to look at where the skills are that we need to try to either develop here or bring in. As I say, it is the early stages and we are hoping that over the next couple of months we will have much more detailed analysis. But space is certainly one of our target areas because it is important to the ACT.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned ANU and UNSW. Is CIT a part of any of those discussions? What courses could they potentially offer?

Ms Arthy: Huge. CIT is a huge part of our offering. It is not just CIT; it is TAFE around Australia. There are some discussions happening about that. “Space tradies”, which is a fantastic term, are front and centre as well. From talking to UNSW and the ANU, I know that they really want to work very closely with CIT on how CIT can deliver the cutting-edge trade skills that are needed. If you think particularly of the renewables area, which is a large part of space—and you have got the electric vehicle work, which is all relevant—there is so much opportunity. We see nothing but opportunity for CIT to be able to position Canberra and our space industry front and centre in Australia.

THE CHAIR: Have any courses been identified, particularly in CIT, that can be on offer for this new initiative?

Ms Arthy: Not directly right now, but they are certainly in the process of doing it. I know, certainly, that CIT is looking. I am talking on behalf of CIT now, as my colleagues are here. We have been talking to them about what courses we can identify to be badged as space-related, space tradies.

THE CHAIR: In terms of the time frame, though, what is your goal in these discussions and negotiations and establishing these courses? No doubt it will be very competitive. How is the ACT going to place itself with any other state or territory in Australia?

Ms Arthy: In the budget—again, this is for the Minister for Economic Development—there is funding to work on the space strategy to try and accelerate our positioning. This is a medium to long-term issue if we are going to be training our own, because if we take a time frame of, say, the next few months, where we identify what our strategy is and work on how we then implement that to get courses stood up, changed or amended—get people in to actually do the training—it takes time. But, again, no-one has a jump. Everyone is in the same position, so what we are trying to do is to be there first and be best, and to be able to make sure that our space industry is well equipped.

THE CHAIR: Did you say there was some funding put aside? What is that funding and how much?

Ms Arthy: I have not got that here. That is for the Minister for Economic Development, under the future jobs fund.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question about the target for 10 per cent of apprentices and trainees to be working on Canberra major projects. How do we monitor and track our progress with that?

Mr Steel: Major Projects might be able to provide some further detail in response to this question as well. As part of the procurement process on projects, the tenderers need to provide an employment participation plan, and that ends up forming part of the contract that is established with the delivery partners of these infrastructure projects. It will differ, depending on what the infrastructure project is, in the number of apprentices that they employ and which particular cohorts they are targeting. We have seen a significant focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices. Of course, the CIT project wants to employ apprentices there as well, focused on women. There are a range of other areas that we are also targeting through that process. We are able to monitor it through the contract process. I will hand over to Duncan Edghill to provide some further detail.

Mr Edghill: Thank you. The minister is correct. Particularly once we are into the construction phase of a project, we receive monthly reports from our contract partner, and included in those contract reports are how they are performing against the apprenticeship and training targets which are included in the contract. What we then do is replicate that reporting through our own governance stream. We have our own project advisory board for each of our major projects. On a monthly basis the project director, who in this project is Rebecca Power, provides a project director's report to our project advisory board which also includes that information. So on a monthly basis the project and our board are monitoring performance against those employment targets.

MR BRADDOCK: Are we simply using the contracted party's reports for the basis of that information? Do we do any compliance or other checks to establish or verify what they say?

Mr Edghill: Generally, the answer would be yes. I am happy to pass to Rebecca for further detail.

Ms Power: Thank you. We do, absolutely, do checks and verification with our contracting parties, who are required to provide data to us. We interrogate that data as required, particularly if we do not think they are meeting the metrics or meeting the implementation plan that they provided as part of their tender process. It is not just a target; they actually give us steps on how they are going to implement those targets. For example, our lead contractor, Lendlease, have a dedicated staff member within their team to meet our social objectives, which includes our apprenticeship measurements, as well as First Nations peoples.

MR BRADDOCK: And have we done any evaluation of achieving the outcomes that the government is seeking to achieve through those targets?

Mr Edghill: The project is still in the design phase for the main facility itself. The main facility has not reached its construction phase, so it is probably a bit too early in the project life cycle to be measuring the achievement of those benefits. But, generally speaking, across our major projects, we have what we call a benefits realisation plan, which is produced at the conclusion of the project. Part of what that looks at is how we perform against employment targets.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

DR PATERSON: My question is in relation to federal Labor's \$10 million pledge towards student accommodation for at-risk young people. University campuses that have student accommodation have a problem with sexual assault. Universities are being much more proactive in addressing that these days. In terms of the design of CIT and getting it right from the beginning so that it is a safe place for young people to come and study, I am just wondering what considerations have been given to safety and design.

Mr Steel: Good question. I will hand over to Rebecca Power to talk a little bit about that. I did mention that the safety element is a big part of what we are trying to achieve through the design of the campus, because of the historic unsafe perception that people have of the interchange, which is actually where this has been built. So that has certainly been part of the design considerations. But it is also about accommodation in this area and what that means in terms of safety by design.

Ms Power: We did have four safety and design workshops throughout the design process which focused on all of those elements, including the elements for the students themselves and for the general population of the Woden town centre. There is a strong focus on CCTV coverage and on appropriate lighting. We have a focus on security, accessing a lot of passive surveillance and making sure that we have as much activation as possible to increase passive surveillance. We are also looking throughout, not just for students but also for the actual construction phases, to make sure that the design is such that it will enable as much safety as possible and also greatly improve the town centre.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

MS LEE: Can I take you back to a topic that we discussed before the break, because it seems to have raised a few more questions. Ms Lundy, before the break you spoke about the role of the board strategy and governance adviser, a role that was held by Ms Hudson and that, since her departure 18 months ago, has been held by some members of the executive. Can you just confirm with members of the executive now holding that role: is this additional duties or is this a full-time position that executive members have been filling?

Ms Lundy: Thank you. In reference to a question before the break, Mr Whale said that Cathy Hudson had left her position 18 months ago. It was actually July 2021, so closer to 12 months ago. I just wanted to place that clarification on the record.

In relation to the current governance position, there are two positions that are augmenting the capacity of the executive of CIT. One is the governance adviser and one is financial matters. The board has taken the decision to request those additional resources, to apply those additional resources, if you like, in order to support our agenda to both strengthen our governance and be in a position to respond to the minister's direction in relation to financial assurances. Those appointments, I think, respect the intent of the minister and the community at this time, at CIT. So the appointments were made in addition to the current executive.

MS LEE: When Ms Hudson had the role, was that a full-time, standalone role and was

she an employed member of CIT or was it by contract?

Ms Lundy: Yes, she was.

MS LEE: An employed member?

Ms Lundy: Correct.

MS LEE: Okay. And how long was her employment in that full-time role?

Ms Lundy: I will have to take that on notice. I do not have that information at hand.

MS LEE: Okay. Could you also, perhaps, take on notice the times, if any, that Ms Hudson attended board meetings.

Ms Lundy: Sure; yes. We will take that on notice.

MS LEE: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The MBA made a submission to the government that specifically sought an increase in apprenticeship subsidies for all trade apprenticeships. Just to clarify: were there any additional measurements for improving apprenticeships in this year's budget?

Mr Steel: As I said before, the Australian apprenticeships User Choice program provides on-demand funding for those that want to undertake an apprenticeship. We will support them with subsidised training. In the construction sector there are further incentives that the Construction Industry Training Authority also provides—a whole range. The commonwealth government provides a whole range of apprenticeship supports as well.

It is not just about the actual subsidies for training. We have been engaged with the commonwealth, over the last two years, in negotiations on a new national skills agreement. What was proposed by the previous government was a complete overhaul of the entire subsidy system for skills, both in the ACT and right across Australia. In that context, our intention is not to overhaul our own subsidy system until negotiations have concluded. Obviously, we have got a new government and they are thinking about what they would like to do.

The previous government was planning on cutting funding to the Canberra Institute of Technology by up to five per cent a year, under their proposal for a historic funding stream for CIT in a national skills agreement. We of course do not accept that position, and that is why the federal government failed previously on two attempts to get a new NSA. In effect, it was meant to be agreed by 1 July 2021. They failed to have it by mid this year, and we have a new government now in place that will consider whether they run ahead on reform there as well.

Within the actual subsidy bands, within the User Choice program and Skilled Capital, we look at the amount of subsidy provided for each different type of course, so we are always interested in the submissions from industry about whether courses within each of the different bands should be adjusted. We do that, from time to time, to reflect a

range of factors. I can hand over to Kate Starick to talk further about that, if she has any further comment.

Ms Starick: I have read and understand the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

Ms Starick: I think the only thing I would add is that, in consultation with the construction industry, including MBA, we also look at the types of qualifications that are included and prioritised under the skills needs list. For example, where there is a change in, say, cert III, where industry indicates that it would like a different qualification because that is the area that it is looking to employ, then we would look at including that on the skills needs list as well, with the subsidy.

Ms Arthy: I can provide some additional information around building and construction apprentices overall. The in-training numbers have actually been steadily increasing, year on year, since 2016. Despite the pandemic, our in-training numbers have remained fairly constant. Compared to pre-pandemic—so, 30 June 2018—the number of in-training apprentices in the building and construction industry has increased by 26 per cent. So we have had strong demand and strong uptake in our building and construction apprenticeships.

THE CHAIR: Is that in CIT and independent RTOs? Is that where you are getting those figures from?

Ms Arthy: Across the board.

THE CHAIR: Have there been any significant changes to specific courses, any subsidies given, just based on the recent skills shortage of particular industries?

Ms Arthy: In terms of the building and construction industry, qualifications come in and out of subsidy lists, depending on a whole range of factors, including whether the qualifications have been superseded, whether there is more demand for a particular qualification or whether there is less demand. In terms of the specifics for building and construction, if there is an area that you would like us to focus on, we can provide further information on notice. But it is rather complicated, regarding the ins and outs of how the subsidy levels change. They usually change because of demand, either up or down, or whether qualifications are superseded or not.

THE CHAIR: In terms of the courses that are on offer, completion rates obviously vary between different courses. What is the government doing to address the low completion rate in certain industries? How are you addressing that?

Ms Arthy: Completion rates are a really difficult item to address. I might turn to my colleagues at CIT, shortly, to talk about what they do. People do not complete for a whole range of reasons. One which is often the most common is that they find they get a job and so they do not need to complete their course. Or they decide that they do not like the industry and they want to change, or their personal circumstances change. It is a really, really, complicated area to have one simple answer for. It is something that I know we have been talking with CIT about for a while, as well as with other providers.

I wonder whether my CIT colleagues can talk about what they do, given that they do the large majority of training for apprentices and trainees.

Ms Robertson: Sure; thank you. I confirm the comment from Ms Arthy that students who enrol in programs do so for a range of reasons. Their experience through those programs at times makes them realise that that is not quite the qualification for them. They do get employed, and we are seeing more of that—that students will complete part of the qualification and go back into work because of the current status of the jobs market. Hopefully, they will go on and complete and then go into work. CIT does keep data in that area. Mr Andrew Whale, our Executive Director, Education and Training Services, will have more details on that, so I will ask him to contribute to this question. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The floor is yours.

Mr Whale: We talked about the survey earlier, the national survey, and we talked about some results. There is a question asked in that survey, for students: “Did you achieve the main reason for your training?” CIT had an 85 per cent response rate to that. In TAFEs there are students that are not completing. Eighty-five per cent are saying that the reason they came to CIT, whatever they wanted to get out of CIT, they did achieve it. That is part of the national average. Again, it varies from course to course and industry to industry as to the different approaches that are more relevant.

In some areas we phone and contact students that drop out, to follow up and find out why, and to get some analysis and reasoning. The biggest reason we found, certainly pre-COVID, was that they got a job; they no longer needed to study. During COVID there was a much stronger response that they did not have the capacity, particularly with school and home learning for schoolchildren and other things that were happening at the time that people had to manage in their daily lives. That rose during COVID as a reason for non-completion.

The other reason is that, as has been mentioned before, they have found that what they thought they wanted was not what they were getting out of that field of endeavour, so they have changed industry. A lot of those students re-enrol in other courses at CIT.

The service that we need to offer at CIT, as students go on and attend classes, is that one-on-one with teachers and with the support staff, really unpacking job opportunities and the industry and those connections. While that, in many cases, is really positive towards completions, in other cases we have found that that reality, that insight which some students did not have before they started their course, has actually resulted in them saying, “I want to do something else or move to a different area of study,” so that has impacted completions as well.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR BRADDOCK: I am interested in the resources dedicated to renewable energy sector skills and education and whether that has changed over the course of this budget. Are you able to provide me with some figures on that?

Ms Arthy: I would have to take that on notice. Is there a particular area that you are

interested in?

MR BRADDOCK: I am interested in the level of investment that the ACT government is making in skills and training in these particular areas, and also making sure that we are seeing that investment increase, in light of the fact that the skills requirements are going to increase with time.

Ms Arthy: I will take that on notice. We do not tend to keep that level of detail, but we might be able to extrapolate that from what CIT allocates, as well as from what we provide through our User Choice and Skilled Capital budgets. It will not be precise. I am not sure how much of a time series we can get, but we will do our best to give you information.

MR BRADDOCK: That was going to be part of my supplementary, the renewable energy skills centre within CIT, so I will be interested in similar figures for that as well. Thank you.

DR PATERSON: My question is in relation to the fact that there is a lot of work going on around women in construction, getting women into those areas of work, and the recognition that there are lots of challenges. One of the obvious challenges is getting women trained in construction industry trades. I was wondering if CIT has been proactive in engaging women in these courses?

Ms Robertson: Thank you. We certainly are. Certainly, it is a priority for CIT. In fact, last week we had a Try-A-Trade event at Bruce campus. Try-A-Trade is where we partner with NAWIC, the National Association of Women in Construction, and the ACT government, to promote the opportunity for young women from surrounding and partner schools to come and have a look at what is on offer for them and to encourage them to think about a trade as an option for further study. So it is a significant commitment we are making. It was a highly successful event. I can ask my colleague Ms Jo Andersen to provide you with a bit more detail on the sort of work we are doing more broadly in that area.

Ms Andersen: Thank you, Ms Robertson, and thank you for your question, Dr Paterson. As Ms Robertson mentioned, we have a very strong school engagement strategy at CIT. The Try-A-Trade event last week was just one example of that, where over a hundred young women in year 9 and 10 across a number of different schools participated in activities at the Bruce campus.

I guess the other examples are our engagement with young people at the CareersXpo. Again, that occurred last week, and there was a very strong showing from CIT on the range of opportunities available across a number of different trades. We have our open day coming up on 27 August, where, again, we will be able to showcase some of the opportunities CIT has to offer.

We also have a number of scholarships for women in trades. One example is that we are really committed to supporting women into trade careers in the renewables sector. There is a sponsored scholarship by Brighte called the Brighte Women in Solar program and that offers five scholarships, to the value of \$2,250 each, which contribute to the cost of student fees at CIT. That is just one example. I am also told that in some of our

building design courses women number about 20 per cent of the students undertaking some of those courses.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

Mr Steel: I can provide some further detail. As at 30 June 2022, 5.72 per cent of apprentices in the building and construction industry were women, which is only about 150 women—still far too low, but up from the 1.97 per cent in 2017. There was a specific women-in-trades initiative that was funded by the ACT government in conjunction with NAWIC and a range of other organisations, including RTOs, to deliver and encourage more women into trades. They are encouraging that on an ongoing basis; that has become a self-sustaining program, now, which is really welcome.

Importantly, part of this conversation is also about trying to get better pathways from school education into these trades, and the ACT government has also committed \$1 million to the Understanding Building and Construction program to boost women's participation in the construction industry as well. That is focused on the high school, and it is being piloted in four ACT schools, with learning modules for students in years 7 to 10. It is about the building and construction industry and its current gender imbalance, and girls in high school are being provided with information on career pathways in the industry to enter the building and construction sector and hopefully encourage them to take part in those skill pathways. It also involves bringing women from industry in to talk to school children and students about what it means to work in the sector as a woman.

THE CHAIR: Any supplementary questions?

DR PATERSON: Just in terms of the pathways into employment, I assume through many of these courses that there are work placements, and I am interested to know how CIT engages with particularly the construction industry in terms of making sure that these workplaces have toilets and are safe for women.

Ms Arthy: Yes, I will ask Ms Andersen to respond to that question.

Ms Andersen: Thank you, Dr Paterson. I guess that is part of the broader industry engagement that we undertake so teachers are very engaged in the industry in making connections for those work placements to happen. We are also in touch with those employers, but also our colleagues in Skills Canberra have a field officer program, and field officers visit newly commencing school-based apprentices in particular very early on in their apprenticeship to ensure that they feel safe and that the right provisions are in place to support an inclusive workplace.

DR PATERSON: I just have one more supplementary question.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is fine.

DR PATERSON: Just in terms of the teachers, is there a priority in getting female teachers as leaders in this area?

Ms Robertson: Again, as you would understand, recruiting for teachers in the

vocational education and training sector is very challenging. I am not aware at CIT that we have a specific program in that area. I am certainly aware that we would be encouraging women in construction to apply for our vocational education and training teaching and project management options.

At the moment, in fact, we have a woman who is leading up our construction program area—our trades area. I understand that prior to having her in the role we had another woman who was leading that area. So we certainly encourage female participation in our leadership and management structures at CIT, specifically in construction. It is probably more of a difficult one because of the pipeline of appropriate people to take on those training roles post trade.

DR PATERSON: Yes, thank you.

MS LEE: A question for the minister or, perhaps, a question for Ms Lundy. Are there any current contracts that CIT has that are either suspended or have been cancelled in the last financial year?

Mr Steel: I will hand that over to CIT to answer—maybe Ms Lundy or one of the other officials.

Ms Lundy: Sorry, could you repeat the question please.

MS LEE: Ms Lundy, my question was: are there any contracts that CIT has that have either been suspended or cancelled in the last financial year?

Ms Lundy: Not that I am aware of, but we will take your question on notice to make sure we give you a thorough answer.

MS LEE: Thank you. And could you take that question on notice in relation to this year, as well?

Ms Lundy: I will take that on notice as well, thank you.

MS LEE: Thank you. While you are taking that on notice, Ms Lundy, if there are contracts that have been suspended or cancelled, can you also provide the reasons.

Ms Lundy: Certainly; we will take that question on notice. I am very aware, Ms Lee, that you may be straying towards matters that are under investigation and that would not be in the spirit of not interfering with investigations, so I will just—

MS LEE: With all due respect, Ms Lundy, I am free to ask the questions that I want. You are also free to answer the question.

Ms Lundy: I will take—

MS LEE: I will ask the question. If you want to go to that, then feel free but I have asked a specific question about contracts that are either suspended or cancelled and the reasons why.

Ms Lundy: I understand your question. Thank you.

MS LEE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Lee. The CPA in its budget submission recommended working with industry education institutions across the ACT to address areas of skills shortages. Will the website refresh finally include listings of all institutions in the ACT, not just CIT and universities? Will it also include independent RTOs?

Mr Steel: Sorry, which website are you referring to specifically?

THE CHAIR: The ACT government website which promotes study in Canberra. It promotes CIT and universities, but it currently does not promote independent RTOs. I am just wondering whether the government, in its refresh of that website, might decide to help promote independent RTOs on that same website for anyone who is looking to study in Canberra.

Mr Steel: I do not know whether you want to make a comment on that one, Ms Arthy?

Ms Arthy: I am just looking at the website. Are you referring to canberra.com.au, which talks about—

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Arthy: I am just having a flick through. What I can say is that we can just take that one on board—

THE CHAIR: And Study Canberra. Yes.

Ms Arthy: —as we refresh it. We are always looking at ways to improve this website, because we want to provide as best information as we can to students who want to come and study here. So we are very happy to take that on board as we upgrade.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR BRADDOCK: On page 142 of the CMTEDD budget papers, I am trying to reconcile the tables. In table 3 it appears that the subject enrolments are decreasing. I am just trying to understand what the implications of that decrease might be. And when I see table 4, I actually see that we overachieved in 2021. I am confused, and I would appreciate your guidance as to how those numbers were reached and what are the implications of those numbers.

Mr Steel: I think it is just the difference between the calendar year and the financial year, but I will—

Ms Robertson: Yes.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Ms Robertson.

Ms Robertson: And I will refer that question to Mr Whale for a response.

THE CHAIR: I might ask Mr Braddock to repeat that question.

MR BRADDOCK: Mr Whale, I was trying to understand, at page 142 of the CMTEDD budget paper, the table that refers to the financial year and calendar year numbers for subject enrolments. And I am trying to understand what the implications are of the different numbers between the two tables, and whether they might have an impact in terms of budget or the ability of CIT to do its work.

Mr Whale: In regard to the earlier part of your question about why the numbers are down, I went to that in an earlier question, and focused on the impact on CIT of the course upgrades that are occurring. That is impacting students' ability to enrol in courses that are being upgraded and transitioned to a new training package. And there is the more general COVID impact on the health and wellbeing of students, and the impact that is having on enrolment. They are having significant impacts on enrolment figures.

We do have to report in both a calendar year and a financial year, due to machinations of government accounting standards. We focus our enrolments on a calendar year, given the way that the school year and the CIT vocational education year pans out in semesters and terms. We tend to use that, so comparisons from previous years are all focused mainly on the calendar year as opposed to financial year enrolments. I am not sure if that goes to the heart of your question.

MR BRADDOCK: I suppose, two supplementary questions on that. Does that mean that in the 2022 calendar year we are now looking to be substantially lower from the 111,000 of the last calendar year?

Mr Whale: Our subject enrolments to date, in 2022, are down again on the previous year; that is correct.

MR BRADDOCK: Okay. And what is the implication of that decrease on the CIT budget?

Mr Whale: There is a range of things. Vocational education is a very complex compilation of funding arrangements and costs. Our revenue generated by direct student fees, is less than 10 per cent, so there is not a huge impact by those numbers being down. But there are areas, such as international students, which have been significantly impacted by COVID. It is slowly rising again, but we are not up to the levels we were pre-COVID, and they are high-fee-paying students by comparison to a lot of other students.

The other issue is that if we have a class of 20 students, and two years ago it was 35 students, we still require the same level of teaching and support. So there is an impact on costs, because the costs do not necessarily decrease at the same rate as the student enrolments tend to drop. This is a challenge for every TAFE across the country, but, overall, the impact of fees is not overly significant in the context of the whole budget.

THE CHAIR: Okay; thank you. A substantive question, Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: I just have a question about the EV training laboratory. That is a partnership between the commonwealth government—no? Yes, could you speak about the program, what that entails, and how it is going.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to CIT, because it is their program.

Ms Arthy: And I will ask Ms Andersen to provide you with additional information on the training facility.

Ms Andersen: Thank you, for the question, Dr Paterson. On 9 May this year, as the minister mentioned earlier, CIT launched a new electric vehicle training lab. The lab is equipped with the latest state-of-the-art equipment, which also includes simulated training systems. It allows students to learn safely on high-voltage electric, hybrid and fuel cell systems, in a very controlled environment. The systems and the course material provide for some flexible delivery options as well. The course, at the moment—it is a micro-credential or a short course—provides students with the experience of working with up to 20 different automotive manufacturers within light and heavy vehicles.

An exciting development for next year is that CIT will be delivering a certificate 3 in automotive electric vehicle technology. It is a long title. That apprenticeship opportunity will be available from the beginning of next year, and CIT expects to enrol around 40 apprentices in that course prior to then.

Mr Steel: When Transport Canberra's zero emission transition plan was developed skills was a major component of that plan because we recognised that the diesel mechanics and those working on the compressed natural gas buses did not necessarily have the skills to work on the electric buses which are coming—the first 12 this year, and we are currently in procurement to buy a further 90. And there will be more after that as we transition.

We need to make sure we have the workforce, so that discussion came out of the plan with CIT. It has now resulted in them making an investment in a facility that will support not only support all our diesel mechanics in Transport Canberra to get the skills they need to work safely on electric buses, but also people in the private sector. It is, I think, a really great example of how the ACT government can support the broader industry.

I was lucky enough to come along to the opening, which was with industry, where all the industry mechanics from right around the ACT were invited along to hear about the new course offerings. There was a lot of excitement because all these mechanics recognise that this new technology is the future, and they need to get the skills to work on them. I think they have now about 1,400 people lined up ready to undertake training. That is not only Transport Canberra mechanics but private mechanics and also the first responders—fire fighters—who will need to undertake some training to understand how to demobilise an electric vehicle that they come across that might be involved in an accident, for example, so that they can safely rescue people from the vehicles and so forth.

So there are quite a range of elements to this. I mentioned that this is the cutting edge. I understand that the CIT is the only RTO in the country that provides a simulated

training experience for the first responders in terms of crash implications. It actually simulates a wide variety of different incidents that they will have to respond to. So it is quite significant, and there is a lot of interest from right around the country in this course. In fact, Tesla is now running its apprentices, nationwide, through CIT's existing skill sets. Obviously, they are interested in the full course and apprenticeship as well. It is an example of where we would like to position not only CIT but also our private RTOs in terms of moving into areas of new and emerging skills need and developing courses. It does require investment, and I understand that CIT has made quite a significant investment in the facilities there from within their profile funding. That will support industry need going forward.

And we are interested to hear from other industries about whether there are other areas where we need to invest in course development, in areas where there are gaps currently. That is part of the discussion that we are having as part of the industry implementation plans for the skills and workforce agenda.

THE CHAIR: Any supplementary questions, Dr Paterson?

DR PATERSON: Just one. It sounds like it will be a very popular course once the certificate 3 gets underway. Are you able to take on all of those students, or will it have to be a staged ramp-up of the course?

Ms Andersen: I anticipate that that number of 40 is probably doable next year. Obviously, we will have to look at capacity to deliver, because we also need to upskill our teaching workforce to deliver that qualification.

DR PATERSON: Yes, great. Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: It has been raised with me that auto crash repairers might be an example where bridging training might be required in that space. Is that an area on which you have been consulting with industry?

Ms Andersen: Sorry; can I get you to repeat that question please.

MR BRADDOCK: It has been raised with me that auto crash repairers is also an industry that has been requesting bridging training to enable them to repair electric vehicles which have been involved in crashes. I was just wondering if that was one of the industries you might have been speaking to.

Ms Andersen: Yes, definitely. Given that the course that we were speaking about earlier, the electric vehicle course, is delivered through the automotive and metals department, I would anticipate that there has been very strong engagement with employers in that space.

MS LEE: This might need to be taken on notice. Over the last five years—so, from 2017—have there been any instances where CIT staff or ACT PS have made disclosure to the Head of Service under the ACT Public Sector Management Act section 9 in relation to public sector conduct, and, if so, how many?

Ms Arthy: I will take that question on notice.

MS LEE: Thank you.

Ms Lundy: I also think that the Head of Service might—

THE CHAIR: Can I get you to repeat that, sorry.

Ms Lundy: Sorry, I was just going to make the suggestion that that question may be better directed to the Head of Service.

THE CHAIR: Can I just suggest that in this instance you did agree to take this question on notice to see what you can come up with in response to Ms Lee's question. Then, obviously, if Ms Lee would like to ask that further, and if it is required in a different hearing, she can do so there.

MS LEE: Yes, that is a good way forward, thank you. Perhaps this one could also be taken on notice then. Over the same period, are there any staff members of CIT or ACT PS that have made a disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act?

Ms Arthy: We will also take that question on notice.

MS LEE: Great, thank you.

THE CHAIR: I will pass my substantive question across to Ms Lee, if she has another substantive, given that we are running short of time.

MS LEE: Thank you for the indulgence. Minister, can I take you back to the ministerial direction that you signed on Saturday on the weekend just gone. I notice that in direction 2, you have got some thresholds in relation to procurements. Can you confirm, please, what the current thresholds are in terms of reporting to the board?

Mr Steel: That is a legal question. If you are asking for legal advice, I cannot provide that but certainly we can—

MS LEE: No, it is a factual question. You have got here, at 2(a)—this is your direction, which you signed off on—procurements for goods and services at over \$1 million and (b), procurements for consultancies of over \$500,000. If that is different to what is currently in place, can you confirm what they are?

Mr Steel: It is a matter for the board, so I might hand over to Kate Lundy in just a minute, but just to correct the facts that you outlined in your question, I did not sign that off on Saturday; that direction was signed on 18 August.

MS LEE: Well, it was published on Saturday.

Mr Steel: The CIT has to comply with the Financial Management Act. There is a range of accountability measures outlined under that financial management framework, and this is a further strengthening of those accountabilities. I will hand over to Ms Lundy to provide some further detail about the delegation.

Ms Lundy: Yes, thank you. Minister, you are correct; we have delegations of authority that have been strengthened, and the board has adopted those additional restrictions on financial delegations expenditure from CIT. We are able to provide that to the committee if that is appropriate, but I can confirm those amounts.

MS LEE: I am just going back to the original question which was: what was it before this direction was signed off? The direction refers to reporting to the board of procurement for goods and services over \$1 million and procurement for consultancies of over \$500,000. Before the direction came out, what were the thresholds?

Ms Lundy: The board had already adopted the strengthened thresholds for the financial delegations but prior to that they were in accordance, I think, with the standard public sector delegations. I think, Ms Lee, for the purposes of accuracy, it would be helpful if we could take your question on notice to show the steps that we have taken to strengthen those financial delegations.

MS LEE: All right; including the figures, please, if you have them. Thank you. Minister, can I take you to paragraph 3 of the direction. Sorry, not paragraph 3—

THE CHAIR: This is a substantive question, and Ms Lee is entitled to a couple of supplementary question. She has asked one substantive for clarification, so I think it is okay for Ms Lee to ask another supplementary question.

MS LEE: Paragraph 3 talks about the engagement of the CIT board with the government procurement board. In terms of the reporting about the departure from the advice of the government procurement board, was this not existing practice?

Mr Steel: That is a question for CIT so I will hand over to Ms Lundy, if she wants to provide any further detail about that.

Ms Lundy: Can you repeat the question?

MS LEE: Ms Lundy, I am looking at paragraph 3—

Ms Lundy: I am still having trouble hearing from this end.

MS LEE: Ms Lundy, I am looking at paragraph 3 of the directions signed by the minister on 18 August—as he confirms—which was published on Saturday. That requires the CIT to consider any advice provided from the Government Procurement Board but also that it must report to the board in relation to any departures from the advice of the Government Procurement Board. My question is: was that not the practice already?

Ms Lundy: It was not always the practice that the engagement that CIT had with the procurement board was reported to the board. So we are making sure that any engagement between CIT and the procurement board is reported to the board in future.

MS LEE: Okay, and is there a timeframe attached to that?

Ms Lundy: I have responded to the minister in correspondence, providing the minister

with assurance that we will comply with that going forward; yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Lee. Mr Braddock has a substantive question. He has a couple of minutes.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question in terms of how CIT campuses plan to get themselves off gas. I know there are going to be limits, given some of the industrial uses you might have, but can you please update me as to how they are reducing the gas usage in CIT's plant?

Ms Arthy: Thanks for the question. I will refer that question to Mr Greg Tong, Senior Finance Director, CIT.

Mr Steel: Major Projects Canberra may also want to say something about what is happening at the Woden campus in relation to energy supply.

Mr Tong: Thank you for the question. As a part of the ongoing plan of how we would procure utilities in the future, we are working with other areas of government, including EPSDD, in relation to the replacement of equipment that we have. We will be doing that in a strategic manner and, again, in consultation. We do, for example, have significant investments on campuses, so we will be looking forward to looking at more environmentally friendly solutions as we move into the future.

Mr Steel: I think, in major projects, we are going to talk about Woden.

Ms Wark: Yes, I can confirm that, after negotiations with the CIT staff, the only provision we had for gas was for cooking and culinary education. We no longer have that requirement. We are now shifting to a full electric culinary education, so we no longer will require any gas at the Woden CIT campus.

DR PATERSON: Could I please have a one-second question?

THE CHAIR: Yes, certainly, Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: Minister, I have a very quick question. Will the hall at the new CIT Woden campus be replacing a Woden community centre?

Mr Steel: No. Planning still continues for a new Woden community centre across the road on Callam Street. That still has a way to go in terms of design and there will, no doubt, be consultation with the community on that separately about what facilities it includes. It may also include multipurpose facilities for a range of different uses, whether that is the arts or broader community use in a hall. The Hellenic Club is also proposing some sort of large theatre space in addition to the existing facilities at Canberra College and their performing arts centre that the government funded. There is going to be a range of different venues on offer for a range of different purposes. I think it will mean quite a significant uplift in community facilities in the Woden Town Centre and the broader Woden Valley.

THE CHAIR: I now draw this session to a close. Thank you, Minister Steele, and officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. As

well, I thank Major Projects Canberra for your attendance today. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice—I note that there have been—please provide answers to the committee secretary within five working days.

Hearing suspended from 12.01 pm to 1 pm.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women

Education Directorate

Haire, Ms Katy, Director-General

Simmons, Ms Jane, Deputy Director-General

Efthymiades, Ms Deb, Deputy Director-General, System Policy and Reform

McMahon, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery

Matthews, Mr David, Executive Group Manager, Business Services Group

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Welcome back to the public hearings for estimates 2022-23. In the first afternoon session we will hear from Ms Berry, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and Minister for Early Childhood Development, and we welcome Education Directorate officials.

There are a few housekeeping matters that I wish to draw your attention to. We are conducting these hearings in a COVID-safe manner. Please practice good hand and respiratory hygiene. We have a cleaner to clean chairs and desks between witnesses if we need to change. Please observe social distancing requirements and use all allocated seats as marked.

All mobile phones are to be switched off or put onto silent mode. Witnesses are to speak one at a time and speak directly into the microphone so that Hansard is able to hear and transcribe them accurately. The first time witnesses speak they will need to state their names and the capacities in which they appear. It is particularly important for anyone who is appearing via Webex that the first time you speak you give us your name and the capacity in which you appear. Thereafter, maybe you could just give us your names so that Hansard will be able to record that accurately.

Please also be aware that proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses could use the words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice," or words to that effect. This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement in front of you. I ask you to confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of that statement.

As we are not inviting opening statements, we will proceed straight to questions. Minister, the teacher shortage taskforce has handed down its final report. First, we welcome this report. I acknowledge that there is a problem and I acknowledge the extent of that problem. Now, given that we only received a copy of this report this morning, I would like to take this opportunity to get more detail from you and the directorate, particularly on the recommendations on page 19.

The first recommendation was the Education Directorate will develop a five-year classroom teacher attraction and retention plan for 2023, to recruit teachers to meet projected demand and retain current teaching workforce. Minister, can you explain on that point and what you did expect it would contain.

Ms Berry: I am very pleased to be able to talk to the teacher shortage taskforce report that was released this morning, and I am very happy to see the interest from the committee on this taskforce and the work that the ACT government and the Education Directorate has been doing with the Australian Education Union. I first want to strongly recognise the value of our teaching profession and our teaching workforce, and, particularly, of the challenges that they have been facing over the last couple of years that have exacerbated a workforce and workload pressure that they have been experiencing for some time now.

I would also like to acknowledge the education union and thank them very much for working with the Education Directorate so that we could understand the issues clearly from their membership, which they identified in a survey that they conducted of their membership in 2019. That survey played a really important role in bringing this taskforce together and identifying the issues very clearly as part of this work so that we could work collaboratively together to resolve going forward.

As you will see in this taskforce, there are a number of recommendations. You have referred to one this morning. It is a strategy over five years to address some of those challenges around recruiting and retaining staff. We have already implemented some changes within our school system to ensure that workload pressures can be reduced from our teaching and school staff workforce, and that includes the pupil free days, which have gone down really well with our teaching profession. They make sure that teachers have the time to develop the plans that they need to, to deliver a really great education to children and young people in the class. Those kinds of workload reductions will need to continue in the short to medium term to ensure that those workload pressures can be reduced, and we can continue to give teachers the time that they need to do that really important planning.

On the specific question that you have asked, of course a lot of these recommendations are things that we will work through with the Australian Education Union and its members to make sure that we come up with a really good plan that meets the requirements under this taskforce. But I also importantly note that this plan is the first plan in the country that goes towards directly focusing on these issues that have been raised as national issues. They are not confined to the ACT. We want to make sure that the ACT can be a leader in this place. We have been leaders as far as making sure that our teaching work staff are some of the highest paid in the country, and that we had some of the lowest turnover rates. Of course, given COVID, turnover rates have been exacerbated, and we are seeing more teachers leaving the sector because of the challenges that they face in their work.

The national plan for education and a plan to address workforce shortages and workload issues will be developed over the next couple of months and is expected to be released by the end of the year. We will be providing our plan to the federal Minister for Education with a view that some of the recommendations that have been offered in our

taskforce conversations will be able to play a really important role in the development of a national plan. I might ask Mr Matthews if he can provide a bit more of a breakdown on the question that you were talking about, in terms of workforce recruitment.

Mr Matthews: I am the executive group manager of business services and I have read and understood the privilege statement; it is not my first rodeo. I think the specific question, Mr Milligan, was about that first recommendation and the five-year classroom teacher attraction and retention plan. Of course, that also arose from a motion passed in this place—unanimously, I believe—around getting some reporting and some data back to the Legislative Assembly on future teaching workforce requirements. This report that was released today certainly makes a good start with that, and I refer members to page 8, which talks about the estimations that we currently have around teacher requirements over the next few years.

I will give you just a little bit of granularity on that. Essentially, what we are looking at when we are thinking about our future requirements are what we expect to be enrolment growths—how many students we have. We have a ratio of 13.1 students to every teacher. That is the ratio that we use to determine how many staff we need. Then, of course, we are looking at what we expect to be our turnover rates—the amount of people who might be leaving the system.

On page 8 of the report, there is some modelling around scenarios 1, 2 and 3, which talk about different levels of separation rate. In summary, generally the report says that we need somewhere around 250 new teachers every year. But that will also be influenced by a number of other factors including the reports' other recommendation about the use of inbuilt relief. The inbuilt relief model is where we recruit additional teachers and have them on staff to deal with unplanned absences. In order to be able to implement an inbuilt relief model we will need some additional teachers. So, this next attraction and retention plan that will be tabled in the Assembly will really be the next level of data and analysis.

I also refer the committee to page 9 of the report. That talks about the absence rates by sector. That is another really important picture that we have been able to document in this report—that the teacher shortage issue is not a uniform issue. It affects different schools and different sectors in different ways. So, when we look at the next level of analysis, we will be looking at it more from a sector basis, as well as looking at some of the specialty teaching areas that we need—languages teachers, specialist disability education teachers and the like. The plan will build on the work that has been done so far and get to more of that micro level of analysis.

THE CHAIR: Is that five-year classroom teacher attraction and retention plan going to be finalised at the beginning or the end of 2023?

Mr Matthews: I can answer that question, Mr Milligan. The Assembly has asked us to table it at the beginning of 2023. Of course, we are working on it already.

THE CHAIR: Recommendation 1 further states that based on current modelling the directorate will need to employ approximately 250 to 300 teachers annually to meet the gross demand and retention. Does that mean 250 to 330 new additional classroom teachers above and beyond the existing workforce every year?

Mr Matthews: Mr Milligan, that is a net number. It is explained in the report. On page 8 it takes into account new teachers that are required from growth in student numbers as well as separations—that is, teachers that leave the system for one reason or another, including retirement and other factors.

MR HANSON: There are 250 teachers—a lot of teachers—and a number of the other recommendations would attract money. There are salary increases and so. Have you done a costing exercise on this document yet?

Ms Berry: Thank you for the question, Mr Hanson. Part of the work that the taskforce will be doing is understanding where the need will be, how it will impact our individual schools, and how it will work across our system. Of course, when you make any of these kinds of adjustments in a school system it is going to come with a cost, but that is the work that the directorate will be working through with the Australian Education Union. Of course, we have enterprise bargaining coming up with the union this year. There will obviously be costs that will be worked through in that respect as well.

MR HANSON: And with some of those issues do you anticipate that this will be part of the next budget cycle, or do you think the urgency requires it to happen sooner than that?

Ms Berry: There are a couple of things, Mr Hanson. This is an ACT plan. We have worked very closely on it with the education union to address the issues that they have raised with us around workforce shortage and workload. We have a national plan. There are certain things that we can do in the ACT but things like migration of qualified professionals in this space are out of our control. Those are the kinds of things that the national government will be looking at as part of their plan and as part of the jobs and skills summit that they will be holding later this month.

We will do our bit with the levers that we have in our control, understanding our system really well, but whatever the federal government has in that space to assist us with implementing our plan we will definitely be adopting, as well. Is there anything else you wanted to add to that, Mr Matthews?

Mr Matthews: Minister and Mr Hanson, obviously the other important fact is that the Education Directorate does attract new funding with new students. So, as the system continues to grow there is growth funding associated with the increasing enrolment. There are also the equitable enrolment adjustments, which are the loadings that are attached to individual funding for particular needs such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with English as a second language, and students with disabilities. There is an agreed funding model for public schools, which takes into account overall student numbers.

MR HANSON: I notice in the report that it says there are 65 vacancies, but last time we were in these hearings in the Assembly you said there was either one or no vacancies for teachers. Can you explain the discrepancy between you saying one or no vacancies and this report saying 65?

Ms Berry: That is right. They were point-in-time vacancies and the advice at the start

of the year was that there was one. Now that has changed, and it is 65.

MR HANSON: So, we have gone from one vacancy—

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson did put his hand up earlier for a supplementary question.

Ms Berry: We have not even had a chance to—

Mr Matthews: We are in your hands, Chair, but I would not mind answering that question as well.

Ms Berry: It is very simple, Mr Hanson. At the time you asked me I said that it was at that point in time. I am pretty confident I said “point in time”—exactly those words. At the time of the release of this report there were 65. That number could have changed today but I do not have advice on that number for today. Mr Matthews, can you provide any more advice on that for Mr Hanson please?

Mr Matthews: Mr Hanson, I cannot provide daily updates, but I would just draw attention to the minister’s earlier announcement or answer on this question. At that time there was one permanent vacancy and a number of temporary vacancies. I believe the figure was around 30, but that is just from my memory. With the numbers that we have talked about today there are 22 permanent vacancies—around that number. The other temporary vacancies are largely associated with people taking carers’ leave or other forms of leave. Through the course of a year, people go off to have families and look after children, and other circumstances emerge, so we would always be expecting a level of turnover, and that has occurred this year. Just as a percentage, for the benefit of the committee, of that number in the report I think it is one per cent permanent vacancies and six per cent of the temporary vacancies. A three per cent vacancy rate is what is represented as of today in those reports, which is something that we are trying to address. We are actively recruiting but I think it is also important to keep that in overall perspective.

MR HANSON: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mr Davis are you satisfied with that supplementary question?

MR DAVIS: I am. I have my own, if that is all right.

THE CHAIR: Yes okay, sure.

MR DAVIS: Similar to Mr Hanson’s line of questioning, I would like a little bit more clarity on how some of these recommendations will be funded. Obviously, the work of the taskforce was happening parallel to the development of the budget. I would be interested in some insight into how much, if at all, the taskforce, during its deliberations, was feeding in some of its earlier findings. What specific new investments are there in this budget that are relevant to the recommendations of the taskforce; or, more broadly, is there an expectation that these recommendations—the report having been released after the budget—will be mostly funded in subsequent budgets?

Ms Haire: I have read and understood the privilege statement. In relation to your

question, Mr Davis, I will hand to Mr Matthews for more detail. I will just say that the report was developed by the Australian Education Union and the Education Directorate and provided to the minister. It was not produced by the directorate directly to the minister; it is a document that we worked on collaboratively with the AEU and we provided it to the minister.

I think the week before last was the first time that she saw it. However, a number of the recommendations do reflect some other matters that we have been working on jointly with the education union, and I draw your attention to recommendation 20 that relates to a safety review which is the subject of an appropriation in this budget. There are a number of the other recommendations in the report. On pages 15 and 16 we have identified a range of things that we are doing already within current resources—and the minister mentioned the workload reduction strategies. At the bottom of page 15 and onto page 16 there is a range of other things that we are doing within the current resources. As the report points out, we have already, during the course of the taskforce, undertaken a range of other things—and in some cases completed—within our current resources. I will hand to Mr Matthews to talk about the further approach to identifying any additional funding that may be required.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, Ms Haire. Just to start at the very macro level, the budget in total increases public school funding to \$927 million, which is an increase of 5.96 per cent over the previous year. So, at a macro level there is quite substantial investment in public education, and that of course is featured throughout the budget papers. We were also able to get some funding previously in the midyear review. That totalled \$5.3 million of new funding. Also in the budget which is being scrutinised today there is a total of \$13.2 million over the forward estimates.

So, there is a fairly significant investment going into public education. Of course, we will look at the cost of these various proposals to see what we can lead from existing resources, and what we may need to provide advice to the minister about that requires additional funding. Of course, the enterprise agreement itself is a major undertaking this year. We have already commenced bargaining with the Australian Education Union. It has published its log of claims. That will also represent an investment by the government in the teaching workforce. So there are funding sources and there is ongoing investment.

The point I would like to make to the committee is that we have largely been talking, so far today, about the teacher shortage issue. That is not a money issue, per se; it is about making sure that we have enough teaching supply to engage as staff. We are open for business today; we want to recruit today. We have sufficient resources to continue to recruit today, and we will continue to do that. The precise problem that the taskforce was aiming to focus on was understanding the nature and extent of the teacher shortage in Canberra and some specific strategies we could use to address that. That includes attraction but it also includes retention and ensuring that we look after and value our teaching workforce.

Appropriately, the taskforce report contains a range of short-, medium- and longer-term recommendations. That was also praised by the union today—that there are some immediate actions that we have taken and we can continue to take. Then, as we get more data and information, we can implement some of those longer-term solutions. So

it is a comprehensive plan. We have a significant starting point within our resources, and we will obviously continue to assess what is required.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We might go to a substantive question, Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK: I will give my substantive question to Mr Davis.

MR DAVIS: Thank you, Mr Braddock. I will go to recommendation 20, if you do not mind, about the safety and culture review. It bears stressing that while I take the point the minister has made in this place previously about the risk of unfairly demonising public schools through this conversation, it is important to impress upon the group how many concerned constituent correspondences I receive, as a member for Brindabella, about particular instances that have caught the attention of the media and schools in my electorate. I would like a better understanding about what the ambitions are for that safety and culture review, and if any early analysis has been done on which campuses specifically need work to be concentrated on, in its earliest iteration.

Ms Berry: Mr Davis, I thank you for that question. It is work that the Education Directorate has been working very hard on to make sure that our schools meet the needs of our school students but also our schoolteachers and staff. I would be reluctant, if you do not mind—I will be guided by the committee—to talk about individual or specific schools but I am very happy to talk more generally about the work that has been done in that space as a system, and about how we need to address it. You can draw conclusions from that—

MR DAVIS: It is okay not to name schools; I would just like to know if the work has been done to identify the schools where this needs to be concentrated.

Ms Berry: Super; no problems. We can do that. I will ask Kate McMahon.

Ms McMahon: Thank you for the question. We will certainly be working with this taskforce for the next 12 months to identify the systems and supports that need to be uplifted to ensure that we have safe systems of operation within our schools, whether that is through a work health and safety lens, through a student lens, or through a teacher professional learning lens.

We have not identified individual schools that require supports. Rather, we are looking at a whole systemic view of what we are doing. We have conducted a review into our schools with a work health and safety lens. We will be getting the report from that review at the end of this month, and from that information, along with information that we have got from previous reports and recommendations, we will be able to put all of that information together and come up with a systemic approach to how we will improve the safety focus in our schools. That will include professional learning for our teachers, and updated policies and supports, as well as the cultural sense of what we are doing slightly differently in our settings.

MR DAVIS: How will this group actively solicit the feedback of parents, students, and teachers through its collaborations? In particular, what work is being done to have conversations with teachers who have left ACT public schools because of concerns

around workplace health and safety? They might not be in our system anymore, but I imagine what they have to say might be very relevant to this work.

Ms McMahon: We are working with an advisory group. That advisory group contains the Parents and Citizens Association; the AEU, CPSU and UWU—our industrial bodies—the AFP; and our colleagues in CMTEDD, through the work health safety team. Who have I missed in that? I think I have missed someone. We will be working with those people on a monthly basis to provide insights from their perspectives. We are also working with our business managers and our principals' associations. We have also been working with our principals to get some focus groups together to give us that information.

MR DAVIS: Is there a plan, or would you be interested in at least considering actively reaching out to teachers who, over the past 12, 24, or 46 months, have left ACT public schools, to see if they have feedback that could contribute to this work?

Ms McMahon: We currently have a survey or an interview when people leave our system. So we can gather that information as well; I think that is a useful idea.

MR DAVIS: Fantastic. My last follow-up question on this is relevant to recommendation 8. Will this taskforce—the group or the unit—also be talking to our relief teachers who are in the system currently and, in particular, some of these inbuilt relief teachers who we are making positions available for.

Ms McMahon: The inbuilt relief teachers are part of the workforce, so they will be represented by their industrial bodies and by their principals.

DR PATERSON: Molonglo Valley has a very rapidly growing population, and lots of young families moving into the area. I was just wondering if we could get a bit of a report back on where school infrastructure is at in the Molonglo Valley and what is planned through this budget and upcoming budgets.

Ms Berry: Thanks very much for that question, Dr Paterson. Of course, this will be of personal interest to you, given it is in your electorate and we are seeing an area of Canberra that is growing in population, but in student population as well. We have had a number of schools developed and growing in that area. Charles Weston School and now Evelyn Scott School, as a P to 10 school, and the new school at Whitlam which I announced recently, are new schools that are planned for the development of Molonglo going forward. I might ask Ms Efthymiades to provide a bit of detail on the data around how we are planning for those schools.

Ms Efthymiades: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thanks for the question. The minister has already given you a brief introduction, but Molonglo is one of the greenfield areas—that is not a surprise or new information to anyone—which means that the planning is different. The population projections, et cetera, and staging associated with land releases—all those kinds of things—are core to what we are able to do in greenfield areas. In particular, in Molonglo we already have new schools. We have more coming, and there is a consideration of a college and high school and those kinds of things. All of the planning is in train.

All of that work is done in partnership with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. We have a very close working partnership there. There are considerations of relative placements. We have conditions for siting schools, et cetera. That is all part of that consideration. As with everything, there is a Goldilocks nature with planning. We obviously cannot be too late, because when there are kids that need a school to attend, et cetera, we have obligations under the Education Act. However, we also do not want to be too soon and not have a viable number to stand up a school. So there is quite a lot of Goldilocks in that. Our work with ANU and the School of Demography there is particularly important. We have what is called a “step model”, which looks at cohorts and how they will progress from primary school through high school to college. We can look at the timing there and get those things as right as possible, so we can get the best value for the public purse, and the best timing for the public purse, but also meet our enrolment guarantees.

DR PATERSON: Thank you. I have a supplementary question.

THE CHAIR: Yes, Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: I have had discussions with the Molonglo Valley Community Forum, and there were concerns raised around the school that is planned for the group centre. How does the ACT government incorporate communities? I guess they are trying to get in early to start this discussion around their concern about the college or school taking up a lot of land area. They would be interested in having a discussion about the school going “up” rather than “out”. I am interested to know: what are the processes for the community to be able to input to ensure that we do get the best outcomes?

Ms Berry: Thank you for that. I have met with the Molonglo Valley Community Forum to discuss some of the initial thoughts they have around the development of this school. At the moment, I would not suggest that in that space we would need a particularly high, vertical school, because there is space there. Keeping in mind I understand that it is going to be a year 7 to 12 school on two different campuses, it will need space for physical activity and other green spaces. Vertical schools would be considered more in more built-up areas of the city. That has been the case in other states and territories, where they have needed to build vertically more than three storeys up, when they have been constrained by land supply. Of course, there is not an infinite supply of land in the ACT either, so we have to be careful, but we also want to make sure that our new schools have everything that students need to make sure they have a great learning experience in the school and outside the school in those physical-use spaces.

I might ask if Ms Efthymiades can talk through how we came to the size of that particular school, because it is a different model to what we have across the rest of the city.

Ms Efthymiades: All the work we do with EPSDD is very much about minimising our land-take but meeting the needs, as the minister has indicated. The other element is that, increasingly, in our schools we are ensuring that the community has access to the additional facilities. So the double gymnasiums, and all of those things, become central community facilities in these new communities. There is a trade-off, but, rather than having, say, a double land-take, where the school has to have those facilities and then the community has to have some as well, sharing those facilities really helps with that

in addition to us doing everything we can to minimise the land-take—like the minister said, not with a multistorey but with a structure that will minimise our land-take for the actual school buildings. That is part of that consideration.

DR PATERSON: Is there any clarification in terms of the consultation process that will come for that school and what that might look like?

Ms Efthymiades: That would heavily rest with EPSDD. As I said, we work with them, but because they navigate the whole planning portfolio, they really lead those interactions. But any time there are questions raised they move back with us and we work through them and try to come up with the best possible way forward.

DR PATERSON: Finally, should community advocates go to you guys and to the EPSDD?

Ms Efthymiades: We are always happy to hear about things of interest and things of particular concern. Planning is the one that we will negotiate for, effectively.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

Ms Berry: Can I just say, I think it is really important that when we build our schools now—because we are pretty much building one new school every year—we often engage with teacher professionals and school staff in the architectural design of the school to make sure it is actually fit for purpose and that it meets the needs of our school communities going forward. It also builds on what we have learnt in our previous builds, taking into account some of the challenges in the topology of the land—the challenges that places on it when it is built on a slope, or whatever. As far as engaging with the community goes, in the past we have asked the community to engage, before the school opens, around school uniforms and school names. We will continue to do that. But now, as we are being more constrained with land supply, the idea of having a school that is a community facility as well is where we really do encourage community members to be engaged.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a supplementary question in terms of vertical schools. Is there a policy in place or some design guidance in terms of how the ACT approaches vertical schools?

Ms Efthymiades: Mr Braddock, the recent Legislative Assembly inquiry into school infrastructure made recommendations around the directorate considering vertical schools as a model where appropriate. The government will be tabling its response to that in September. We currently have a design specification which does not mandate single or multiple levels. That is not a factor at the moment, but it is a specific recommendation from the recent infrastructure inquiry that vertical schools are considered as part of the way in which the directorate responds to community need, taking into account the factors the minister has just spoken about.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary question while we are on this topic: with new schools coming and upgrades to some schools, like Margaret Hendry in Taylor and in Kenny in my neck of the woods, what consultation is government having with sporting bodies, groups, clubs or associations in terms of their facility needs? I know the government's

response to the crisis we are seeing in terms of a lack of endorsed sporting facilities is to use facilities in schools. What is the government doing to ensure the facilities that they do build in new schools meet those requirements of sporting bodies?

Ms Berry: We work very closely with sport and recreation—I have got my other hat on here. Our education directorate works very closely with sport and recreation and individual sports around the needs, and what we need to build to make sure that we meet those specific needs. You will see, as a result, a good example of that at Evelyn Scott School, where we worked very closely with sports clubs—specifically, with emerging sports like roller derby, which needed specific court surfaces, lines and space to be able to do their activity. Evelyn Scott School’s double gym has been designed in a way that is inclusive of that sport and other indoor sports as well—like netball and basketball and a range of different activities. We made sure that we worked with that particular sport club in that group, for example, to ensure we had the correct floor surface, line markings and space that they required to be able to run both as a training venue and a competition venue. We have the seating in place to make sure that it meets that need as well.

Those are the kinds of conversations we now have with individual sports around what we need to do in a school-build. It has not been done in the past. It is something we have been addressing over the last five years much better than we ever have in the education space—actually working to make sure that our schools are not just places of education during the week but that, outside of school hours, they can be used by community groups and sports groups. We work towards making sure that we meet those needs. As I said, we build on the previous school designs in newer schools, as we build them, to make sure we can improve on those and have even better outcomes as we get along.

MR BRADDOCK: I was speaking to the roller derby people the other day about Evelyn Scott School, and they did raise a couple of issues in terms of their ability to access climate control. That is usually in part of the school that is not accessible to them. They also raised concerns in terms of the cost to hire the hall and whether it is financially viable for them to be able to do so on an ongoing basis. I applaud the installation of the infrastructure, but there are other things that are critical in terms of enabling local sport to be able to utilise it.

Ms Berry: I have not had those issues raised with me specifically by the roller derby crew. I would say that the costs are minimal. The costs are there not to make money. They are for the maintenance and cleaning of the school after the community’s use. It is not like we are rolling in dollars from the use by sports clubs of these facilities. Whilst I understand that everybody wants something for free these days, unfortunately, using these facilities costs money. Basically, that funding that the school has raised through the hire of those facilities is to do the cleaning and maintenance, opening and closing, et cetera, of the facilities their community use.

On the heating and cooling of that facility, I do not know that we could have an answer today on the specifics of that, but I could probably take that one on notice.

MR DAVIS: Just to pick you up on that, Minister, I do not know if it is entirely fair in the case of roller derby to suggest they want something for nothing. I had the same

meeting as Mr Braddock with roller derby, and they are very happy to pay for the use of the facilities.

The discussion I had with them was about a concern that the government seems to have purpose-built a facility to accommodate for a particular sport, and that sport has said that the cost prohibitive means they may have to move back over the boarder to Queanbeyan and rent facilities from the New South Wales government in order to run their sport.

I would like a little bit more understanding about what happens between the governing announcing “We will build a brand new school and it will accommodate this sport,” and then new people coming in—obviously business managers, principals and other people who manage that contract. Through what appears to be a series of different conversations and unfortunate events, roller derby now feel like they cannot use a facility purpose built for their sport into the long term. There words were, “It’s an unsustainable arrangement.”

Ms Berry: First of all, I would say that I did not suggest that roller derby were saying they wanted it for free. I suggested that everybody would prefer not to pay and for it to be free, so I would correct the record there. I have not heard those concerns from roller derby. I appreciate that you have met with them, and that is something they have raised with you.

This was, I think, an \$8 million dollar facility, which was specifically built and designed with roller derby in mind. I am not suggesting that they should say, “Oh yes, this is great, thanks very much, but now we can’t use it.” That is not what I am suggesting. I am saying that it is a state-of-the art facility designed specifically for roller derby use and other indoor sports.

On the cost, as I said: it is not a money-making business; it is about maintaining a very good facility to ensure that it can be used and is sustainable into the future. On the sport itself, perhaps that might be another question for another directorate—to talk about the sustainability of that sport and ways they could be assisted in that regard. On the use of a school facility, it is a very small amount of money for the upkeep of a significant investment into community sports in the ACT.

MR DAVIS: Minister, are you willing to meet with Varsity Derby League to go through their specific issues?

Ms Berry: Of course I would meet with them. You do not even need to ask that, Johnathan.

MR DAVIS: To be fair, I ask because they chose to come and meet with me. I imagine they would have made an effort to reach out to somebody with a bit more influence in the Education Directorate than me, in the first instance, so that is why I asked.

Ms Berry: Of course, I would.

THE CHAIR: My thoughts are that if you are referring to a specific facility for roller derby to be located in, that would probably be better directed under the sports area than

going through the education area.

MR DAVIS: The facility is managed by the directorate. That is why it is the appropriate place to ask here—it is a public school facility.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Berry: Did you have anything useful to add, Mr Matthews?

Mr Matthews: Maybe the Assembly can direct me, after I give my answer. One very important clarification is that this is a school facility that has been designed in a way to accommodate roller derby, so that is the important starting point. It did cost additional money, both with the expansion of the actual building as well as the reinforced flooring to accommodate that. That was a government commitment, and that commitment was fully delivered on. If you have not been out to that hall, and you may have, Mr Davis, that is one of the most outstanding indoor gyms in Canberra. It is an amazing facility, and that is the feedback we get from all users—that it is quite an incredible facility.

That said, I think all of the issues you raise are really important. The community use rates are pegged at the cheapest possible level, and they do apply uniformly across all ACT government schools. Principals are very proud to work with their anchor tenants, and in the case of the Denman Prospect school, Evelyn Scott, I think that is the best way of describing the roller derby: they are an anchor tenant, and they have developed a productive relationship with the school. We want that to continue, and we are really happy to support dialogue. If the roller derby associations are experiencing financial pressures, other agencies also do that, and they come to the school and discuss what those issues are. We do our best to, wherever we can, accommodate them.

It is very much a cost recovery basis, as the minister said. In fact, it is not a full cost recovery model, so we have to make sure that we can get sufficient user charges to make sure that we can maintain these facilities to reasonable standards.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We might move on to the next substantive question.

MR HANSON: My question is on roller derby—no I am kidding! Who knew roller derby was the biggest issue in education! One of the things that I have not seen in the report, and it may be there, is the issue of the administration that teachers have to do. Certainly, anecdotally, and it was in the union survey, the burden of admin is causing a lot of extra workload for teachers, and that is not really why they got into the teaching profession in the first place.

Can you tell me if I have missed it in the report? Is there some action being taken there to reduce the administrative burden? Further to that, I understand now that the directorate is looking at the exit interviews that are being conducted for teachers and whether admin is one of those issues that comes up. What else might be coming up in those interviews?

Ms Berry: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I will start by referring back to my initial spiel on the taskforce and the things that we have already put in place to assist teachers and

remove workload issues. The pupil-free days, for example, was one of the things we have implemented in our schools to give teachers the time to do the planning inside of their school hours, rather than them spending time outside of school doing that work.

That is one administrative burden that we have removed from teachers, and we have already implemented that. That will continue, as I said, and will need to continue for the short to medium term while we address the more challenging matters of supply and making sure we recruit enough teachers, and retain the existing teachers, in our school system.

I might ask Mr Matthews to talk in a little bit more detail about some of the workload reduction issues that were discussed during the development of the plan.

Mr Matthews: The first point to make is that teachers want to teach, and we very much acknowledge that. That is why they are attracted to the profession. That is why they do their training. It is what they love to do—to spend time with children and young people, teach them and see that learning growth and that impact they can have on the lives of children and young people.

We recognise the importance of that for our whole community, so it is absolutely within our interest also to be able to work with our school leaders and our teachers to really make sure that teachers are spending as much time doing that as possible. We are looking again at this issue, and it is something that requires eternal vigilance.

The minister has referred to some things that we have done on a short-term basis. Also, in the previous enterprise agreement, we introduced a mechanism called “EA implementation plans”, which is really another mechanism to look at workload management at a local school level. They are jointly negotiated at a workplace level by the union with the principal, and they have also served to be a really productive way of having that conversation around what a reasonable workload is, what administrative tasks are necessary and who should be doing those tasks.

I would also refer the committee and Mr Hanson to recommendation 19 of the report, which is a new commitment that has been made:

The Education Directorate will establish a Sustainable Workload Management Committee at a system level to identify drivers of teacher and school leader workload ...

That is a new mechanism where we are, essentially, getting all of the key stakeholders together at the systems level to perform that gatekeeping role to make sure that the things we are asking of schools are absolutely necessary. They are either a key compliance or safety task, or they are essential tasks that are to do with the administration of a government schooling system with all of the accountability that that entails. We need to be able to very clearly distil what those essential tasks are versus the “nice to haves” and really make sure that we are strictly prioritising, particularly in these times, the “must dos”. Where things do still need to be done at a local school level, we can then engage in how those schools can be supported by the Education Support Office from the directorate and what additional staff might need to be employed or engaged to do some of those tasks. Again, I will just refer to the report itself. It talks

about the growth in learning support assistance over a similar period—so, since 2016. I believe it is page 7 of the report, table 2, that talks about a 47 per cent increase in the number of school assistants since 2016. I believe that is 412 staff, if my maths is right.

Again, that is another commitment from the Education Directorate to putting other staff on the ground in schools to assist with the overall running and management of our schools, and particularly to focus on student wellbeing as well. Some of the challenges that teachers experience are managing a classroom and supporting all students. That is one of the key roles of differentiated teaching and learning, a core skill of teachers—and also ensuring they have assistance in the classroom for that. Yes, Mr Hanson, I think the administration point is well made and understood, and something that will be an ongoing discussion within the directorate.

MR HANSON: As part of that review, and you may have done it already, have you identified anything—because we have got a more autonomous school model—that has been duplicated across lots of schools that could actually be a central function and take some of that administrative burden off?

Mr Matthews: Minister, if you do not mind me answering that. I think a really good recent example of that is the COVID-safe plans that we have developed at a systems level during the current school year, 2022. What we have done, essentially, is provided a sort of backbone of a COVID support plan, with all of the key controls and advice to schools about how to manage that. Then that has been subject to consultation at the local level by principals with their staff and with work health and safety reps.

It is a really good example of where we can break the back of the task, in terms of giving schools good advice around what represents good practice, but then it can be done at a local level to meet those local circumstances. Those are the sorts of opportunities where we can assist to avoid the duplication that you mentioned.

MR HANSON: In my question I also asked about the exit interviews and whether you have been able to get across any consistent themes at all?

Mr Matthews: The answer to that is that the number of exit interviews is not large enough yet for any sort of strong themes to come through—it is a range of circumstances. Last time I looked, I think we had about 28 or 29 exit interviews. That is a figure off the top of my head. We will report more on this in future annual reports. I think there is no doubt that there is some general pressure that teachers are experiencing in these times. I think we all know that. We all hear that, and we understand the impact that that has on people.

But there are also a range of other specific circumstances: there are people that teach in Canberra because they are on a military posting, something else that you are familiar with, Mr Hanson; and there are people that are moving between different careers. There are a range of reasons why people do leave teaching jobs. It is not all a factor of dissatisfaction with being a teacher, and, as I said, our overall separation or turnover rates are pretty stable and fairly modest. It is something that we need to focus on because we want to keep all of our teachers, as much as possible.

MR HANSON: Thanks.

DR PATERSON: Just on the workload management committee in the newly released report, are you able to talk about any plans for what that might look like, when that might start and who might be on that committee?

Mr Matthews: We have just made that agreement with the AEU recently—I think the report was provided to the minister on 17 August. We have undertaken to agree to the terms of reference and the membership with the Australian Education Union. We have not finalised that yet, but certainly we would also expect an important voice for school leaders on that forum. School leaders have critical responsibilities in any schooling system and in our public education system, so we would absolutely want to hear their voice and, of course, the Australian Education Union has a range of members, including school leaders.

They are some of the core perspectives, but we also engage very heavily in consultation externally with the parents and citizens council as well. We really think that it is critical that we hear the parent voice. They are often the ones at home when their children might come home and say, “why is my camp not happening” or “why is this happening?” So we absolutely want to make sure that parents are seeing that we are valuing their children’s learning, that we care about their children’s wellbeing, and that we also care about our educators and making sure that they can continue to do their job really effectively. It is certainly not going to be a closed conversation. We want to make sure that everybody has visibility in this really important question of having manageable and sustainable workloads within our schools and supporting our teachers to teach.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

MR DAVIS: I am interested specifically in recommendation 8 of the *Teacher Shortage Taskforce* report regarding the use of in-built relief teachers in all schools. You will all recall that we had long conversations about in-built relief teachers during last estimates, so it is interesting to see that picked up in the report as well. Can I get a better understanding of how many full-time positions there are for in-built relief staff currently and any early indications of how many positions we intend on making available to accommodate for this in-built relief teaching staff pool?

Mr Matthews: We do not have full line of sight of that data at the moment. We do not ask for specific reporting from schools at the moment about their level of in-built relief, so that is a local school decision. Recommendation 8 does talk about encouraging the use of in-built relief teachers in all schools, so it is not something that will be mandated as such. As was mentioned outside of this chamber today, there are people that still want to be casual teachers. They just want to work a few days here and there. They do not want to be on staff in an individual school, and they are going to be an important part of our overall teacher supply as well.

The in-built relief model gives us as much of a buffer as we possibly can around unplanned leave, because there are already people on site in the school community that can take up additional teaching responsibilities.

MR DAVIS: Can I just pick you up there on the point of encouraging: who is it exactly that is being encouraged? Are we going to be encouraging principals to take advantage

of the in-built relief teacher pool managed through the directorate, or is the directorate intending on encouraging current casual relief teaching staff to be a part of that pool and take up new positions?

Mr Matthews: Probably all of those things. One of the starting points is the funding that schools get for casual staff, or relief staff. We have got some really good feedback from the principal, for example, this morning in our drop-in session on the *Teacher Shortage Taskforce* report around how the funding arrangements work for casual staff. We will be working through those sorts of details so that the full costs of the in-built relief are reflected in the school budget, for example. That is one strategy.

Obviously, we also need to help schools with the supply of teachers so that they can actually implement an in-built relief model. We have been for the last year, and we will continue always, offering work to our casual teachers. We go to the casual register regularly—most recently at the beginning of this school term, and we invited all of them to have a block of work for the remainder of the term, where they would be guaranteed employment and also that they would be placed in a school by negotiation with them. That is one of the system levers we have to secure some supply of teachers, and then we can broker those teachers into the schools with the most critical staffing requirements.

There are a whole range of strategies that will be needed to implement this model, but I think at a very basic level what we are saying is that the casual model, as it has historically been known, is no longer going to meet the needs of our system: that is, there are simply not people to ring on the morning when a staff member rings in sick. There are not enough of those people, so we need to restructure the way we are doing our staffing in schools to make sure that we have as many of those people already employed so that we have got a buffer for the inevitable periods where there are people that are unwell or engaging in other really important activities like release time for assessment and reporting and professional learning, which is a really critical part of a day-to-day teacher's life.

MR DAVIS: Do we intend for these in-built relief teachers to be managed by the directorate and deployed to different campuses on different days, or do you envisage a model where a school has that in-built relief teacher, or teachers, who are always on that campus?

Mr Matthews: Mr Davis, both of those things that you mention are already happening today. Basically, when we do our staffing round every year and we employ new teachers every year, principals literally come into the room and make sure that their individual school staffing requirements can be met. They know what their staffing profile is, they know what the needs of their students are and they know exactly what specialist teachers they need. They are able to access the teachers that they need through a staffing round or through additional supply of teachers.

Already some principals are employing extra teachers as part of that in-built relief model who are not necessarily assigned to a class, for example. So they do not have a year 3 class that they are fully responsible for, but they are available as a registered teacher to work across the different needs of the school. That sort of staffing model has been employed for a significant period of time with specialist teachers, for example.

Specialist teachers, whether they are music teachers or art teachers, are employed and then deployed across the curriculum or across different class and learning groups in order to deliver education.

What we want to do is to support our principals to put in place the staffing team that they need at the beginning of the year so that they can have some buffer for the inevitable unplanned leaves that do occur every year. And where we can, and where we think it is important, we will also do some central engagement of relief teachers, offer them blocks of work and then deploy them to schools that are needed.

Casuals already have existing relationships with school principals. That is evident in the report as well. There are a number of casuals that work in a small number of schools because they already have that pre-existing relationship with the principal. That is appropriate. We do not want to get in the middle of that. That is working for that person and that school. What we are trying to do is put in place other measures and other strategies to support the supply of teachers to meet the needs of every school.

MR DAVIS: I am interested in how this in-built relief teacher pool might, if at all, intersect with the work happening on the system-wide safety review?

I ask that because I have had it put to me by a relief teacher that, obviously, there is a model that the directorate uses for how many teachers are required in the school relative to how many students, but, in certain campuses, which the work of that review acknowledges, you might have some short-term behavioural issues—in particular, campuses which are creating safety concerns—having more adults on campus, even if it does not fit into a particular formula, might be very useful. Do you see those two working together? And are we open to the finding of recommendation 20—that in some schools, at some instances, it is worthwhile bending the rules on the teacher-student ratio and having a few extra teachers in that school at that time could help create a safer environment?

Mr Matthews: I will keep my answer brief, because it is a really important question and a quite complex question. The short answer is that there is a general ratio which is used to generally fund schools, and adjustments are made all the time to meet the needs of individual schools. Depending on the needs profile of the school, there will be additional loadings that are provided to schools to supplement that funding, and there is also other funding that is available to support children with complex needs.

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach. There is a general funding model, and then there is supplementation funding and support to meet the needs of different students in different school communities.

MR DAVIS: Thank you.

Ms Berry: I might follow up on that and say we would not be bending any rules that would be in breach of the enterprise bargaining agreement without full consultation with the education union. That is what this task force work has been about. Katie, did you want to add anything else?

Ms Haire: I would add an additional point to that, Minister. Mr Davis, If you wished,

Ms McMahon could talk to you with some more detail about those complex cases, where there are behaviour issues, and the role the directorate plays in supporting schools, which comes under the auspices the Safe@School Taskforce work that she is leading.

MR DAVIS: No, I tell you what I might do, conscious that Ms Clay is waiting and that my office has already made a request to get a briefing on that very thing, I might save my specific questions until later.

Ms Haire: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Davis.

MS CLAY: I would like to have a chat about school facilities planning in Belconnen. We have got a really rapidly growing town centre in the Belconnen CBD, and I am interested in your thinking about whether it is better to expand the Macquarie and Florey schools or whether it would be better to have a special school built in the Belconnen CBD?

Ms Berry: Thank you. I think I have responded to your office on those questions previously, but I am happy to answer them again. Ms Efthymiades will be able to talk a bit more about the planning for increases in school population across the city and specifically in the Belconnen area.

We did look very carefully at Florey and whether that was a school that we needed to expand, given that it has some space there at the dry land oval. One of the reasons we delayed any kind of consultation or work on the oval was to make sure that we carefully looked at whether or not Florey needed to be expanded or a new school could be built on the dry land oval.

I know that that was frustrating to some of the Florey community, because we were engaging the school community during this process to understand whether or not we needed to expend or grow a new school in that area. The advice that I have is that that is not required at Florey, and I think it is the same at Macquarie as well. We can talk through the enrolments in both of those schools and where it is heading.

I think there is a report somewhere publicly about the enrolment data, but if there is not, we can provide some information about what that is looking like once it is available—probably next year, because enrolments are continuing this year. I do not think Florey, or Macquarie either, has an increase in student population that would require a permanent or more significant increase in student places.

Weetangera, of course, has a new modular learning unit installed out there, which is beautiful, which I am sure you have seen. So that is taking into account the student increase in that space.

Ms Efthymiades, would you like to go through some of that projection?

Ms Efthymiades: Thanks, minister—

MS CLAY: Maybe, if I could direct you back to the original question, which is: where

will the kids in Belconnen CBD be going to school, and how are we planning for that? And I will lead into my next supplementary question, which is: how will they walk or ride there? If they are being sent to Macquarie or Florey or somewhere, that is a couple of kilometres away over some major roads.

Ms Efthymiades: The planning approach is regional in its first instance, so that is very helpful in a city like Canberra. The Belconnen planning is multifaceted. In addition to the forecast that we have, we crosscheck those twice a year against the two census periods: one in February, so we get that in about March; one in August, which we get in about September, so we are about to have a refresh check, because they are actual kids, and we crosscheck that against the projection model.

One of the things that is really interesting to me in the planning space is that our growth was about three per cent per year for a number of years and it is now projected to be about one per cent. So the growth is not enormous, and it is slowing. That has a lot to do with migration, the pandemic, et cetera. That has taken some of the heat out of the growth pressure in terms of infrastructure responses.

Regionally, we look at all the possibilities. We look at whether there are some policy things that can change, such as category A and category B school classifications, which therefore mean some schools are not able to take just any kid who might want to go. Then we look at priority enrolment areas. In Belconnen there are quite a few shared zones, which means there is flexibility within those schools. Then we move on to infrastructure responses, et cetera.

In terms of the current town centre, those areas are part of a current priority enrolment area. So there are schools that those children can be accommodated in without us being in breach of class sizes or any of those other restrictions, so we can guarantee their enrolment. The question is, when we get to a critical mass that requires an infrastructure response, whether that is a new school or an expansion of existing schools.

We have just been through that exercise in the inner north of Canberra, and there is a budget commitment that reflects that, where not having changes to the PEAs was the preferred response in the local community. The permanent expansion at Majura is a key part of catering to the needs of the enrolment numbers in that area.

We are going through the same exercise, effectively, in Belconnen, where we are looking at what that would look like when the numbers get to a critical mass and it is clear that we need a more permanent infrastructure response for them. It is not there yet. I take your point about transport and travel, and that sort of thing. That can be responded to based on the needs and the quantum of the needs, et cetera, and which direction the kids are actually travelling in.

MS CLAY: So if you are child living in the Belconnen CBD, if you were sent to Macquarie or Florey—this is my area and my daughter goes to Macquarie Primary—you would have to walk probably two kilometres, I think, and you would have to cross Belconnen Way, and there are not really any good, dedicated routes. We have, on the one hand, governments doing all this work on active travel and Ride2School, and, on the other hand, you are telling me that we are possibly, maybe, considering in the future a Belconnen CBD school. At the moment, if there are kids there, they are sent to

Macquarie or Florey. Do we have any way for them to get there, other than by being driven?

Ms Berry: You do not just build a school without understanding whether there are enough students to go to the school, to ensure that it is viable. At the moment, what we are saying is that there are enough schools in the region, and within that area, to cater for the needs of those young people and their families.

I get that there is another issue around travel, and that is not just confined to Belconnen. Across the city there will be instances where families need to navigate different ways to get to school, or to get anywhere. But in this circumstance, with regard to a school, there is a whole lot of other work that is considered around how and when and the timing for a new school that is built—not just travel. However that occurs, and that is one of the things that is considered when we do develop a school—to make sure that there is good access and safety areas around school developments and new schools—but it is not the only thing that is considered when we are thinking about whether or not there is a need within a particular area for a new school.

MS CLAY: I was really pleased to hear you talking about the Florey dry land oval consultation, and there are a lot of people very excited to see that progressing. That is great. We are obviously pleased to get that kicked off in the Assembly. I have had a bit of concern raised with me because the people who have been to those consultations tell me that the consultation is only taking in one-third of the oval—the bit of the school. They did not want the whole thing built, necessarily, at the same time, but they wanted to have the whole thing planned out at the same time—to have the school and the community all talking about this green space at the same time. Are we only consulting about the one-third and not talking about the rest of the oval?

Ms Berry: That is right. That has been made very clear in all the correspondence and conversations that I have had with the school, the school community and the broader community over a number of years—well before you were elected into this place. It was more about ensuring that that school had enough space, given the design of that school was developed at a time when it had different aspirations around its future use—and that has not been the case. It did not work out the way that that school was planned for, so it has really been landlocked. Ensuring that that school had a place for young people to play and learn outside of the school infrastructure, was the most important priority for me. It did not mean that the rest of that dry land oval could not be developed, redeveloped or refreshed in different kinds of ways, but I have always said that the priority was for the school portion of that oval to be part of the conversation. I specifically engaged with the school first and I thought I made that very clear to the community at the start. There may be new people who have come along to the conversation who have not clearly understood that. That has been the first part of that.

There are a couple of things to take into account here as well. That portion of the dry land oval that is being consulted on right now, and the other school upgrades, will be funded by education, but the broader oval consultations in the future, around what might be the use of that area, will be funded from a different directorate, probably TCCS or sport and recreation. We are not at that stage of the consultation. It is just this first part now and the consultation is being developed by the Education Directorate and TCCS.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ms Clay. I might refer to budget statement F, page 18. It says that there is \$1.3 million going towards new and expanded schools in Gungahlin. There has been feedback from the P&C, from Gungahlin College, however, reported in the media. One of the quotes that I am referring to is:

... the college is already at full capacity and may not be able to manage until the new college is ready—

hence Kenny—

Parents are concerned about the quality of teaching and learning that will be possible for college students while we wait for this one to open.

When will the planning be finished, and what is the expected timeframe for completion of construction of Kenny?

Ms Haire: This year's budget allocates \$1 million to complete the feasibility and planning process for an additional college in Gungahlin. The funding of a future college will then be subject to the decision of a future budget and a government decision at that time.

I am very happy to pass over to Ms Efthymiades to talk about the process for the consultation and the feasibility that will be undertaken. She can also talk to you about the arrangements that are being put in place in consultation with and in partnership with the principal of Gungahlin College to address the capacity issues at Gungahlin College at the moment.

There are those two aspects to it: how we are doing the planning and feasibility that will then be subject to a future decision of government and a future budget; and the issues that you raise about Gungahlin College's capacity now. We have also been doing some considerable work on that. I will hand to Ms Efthymiades to speak about those two matters.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you very much.

Ms Efthymiades: I might go with your original piece around coping now, and then, pass to Mr Matthews for the feasibility and design work—the capital works angle. So, Mr Milligan, this school is one that we have been watching. I have had planning in my portfolio for five years now, and we have pretty much been watching Gungahlin College really closely, every census, to see how it is tracking, because the forecasting was that it would grow. But actually, I have gone back through all the censuses in preparation for any questions on this, and the reality is that since 2017, there has been no growth; there have been some tiny little increases, and then there have been decreases. So there are actually less students enrolled at Gungahlin College this year, than there were in 2017. So we have been monitoring it every year though, as I said.

THE CHAIR: Do we know what figure that is, what number that it has been increased by?

Ms Efthymiades: Yes, so 2017 was 1,166; 2022 is 1,024.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Efthymiades: So it is not—I would not say it is a massive decrease, or anything, but so, a lot of that is to do with those policy settings that we put in place. What we have done is open up Dickson College for more students if they would like to go there, and I think that what it has done is stood us in good stead for a number of years now.

So we are getting a sense that 2023 is going to be a genuine uptick. We have been having ongoing conversations with Gungahlin College because of all of the close monitoring. But we have been talking to them quite deeply about 2023. And so, there are a number of internal levers that they can use around scheduling, et cetera, that will support them.

The actual capacity at Gungahlin is 1,280 students. So you can see that, at the top level, we do have some wriggle room there. But when you have a college of that size, you have some scheduling things that you need to manage very well and Gungahlin College has continued, and will continue, to manage it really well.

Particularly, in high interest areas like hospitality, it is about how you schedule to have enough classes, given it is a very high demand area of study. So we are actively working with them, both on internal things and possibilities for other spaces that they will be able to use in the short term and on considering whether we will need to put some additional, temporary infrastructure in there to manage the immediate term. The reality is, though, we do not want that college to get a lot bigger than it currently is. Hence, the second college coming online in Gungahlin. And again comes the Goldilocks methodology—we need the second college to be at a time where there are sufficient additional students to sustain it. Because having fewer than three to four hundred students makes it hard to sustain the curriculum offerings that would be expected in a college. So it is a bit of Goldilocks work, but we are working incredibly close with Gungahlin College in an ongoing way and some of those conversations about managing 2023-2024, et cetera, are very active.

Mr Matthews: Chair, obviously, this is your neck of the woods. You obviously know the area pretty well. We are in a position to do is to immediately work into some master plan and preliminary design work for the college, on the basis that we are actively exploring the possibility of using the education-owned site next to the Gold Creek senior school campus. People will know where that is, in Nichols. There is a blank piece of land at the back of the school, which is adjacent also, or nearby, John Paul College. One of the ways that we will do this work is to look at the feasibility of that as a site, but we are also open-minded and will look at other sites within the Gungahlin region. We need to do this based on the longer term planning. My colleague Ms Efthymiades has talked about it—that is, when we build a college, we need it to last decades and we need to know that we have sufficient demand and will be able to meet requirements over future decades. Siting of the college is really important. Particularly for older students, we need it to be in proximity to retail centres and employment opportunities, and also, I guess, accessibility is a critical factor as well as the ability to get there through public transport.

We have our own school site at Gold Creek senior campus and part of the consultation

has to be, as I said, with the neighbouring schools, but also particularly with the Gold Creek school. We needed to make sure that they are engaged in the conversation about how this would change the use of that campus and the nature of their secondary school, which would be co-located in close proximity to it.

That all said, we believe we can crack on with this quite quickly, in terms of both community consultation and then the design and master plan work, so we would be in a position to come back and provide detailed advice to government about the costs and other requirements of building a second college.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will certainly watch with keen interest to see how it progresses.

MR DAVIS: I refer to the parliamentary and governing agreement between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens. In appendix 4 it says:

8.5 Commit to no more school closures, including examination of models to keep Tharwa preschool open

Can I get an update on what supports have been provided to Tharwa Preschool to ensure its sustainability?

Ms Berry: Thank you. I think we have committed to that over and over again, Mr Davis—that there would be no more closures and I can commit to that again today. I repeat myself in that space: it is definitely our commitment not to close schools and not to close Tharwa. In fact, I understand that Tharwa has had an enrolment of 13 for next year, so that will be operating as a preschool very well with 13 students.

MR DAVIS: Obviously, 13 is great. It is wonderful that school community will stay vibrant. What supports were provided to help us get to that number? And what planned supports do we have over the medium to long term to ensure that program remains sustainable?

Ms Haire: Mr Davis, I might hand to Ms Efthymiades in a moment, but my understanding is that there were a number of applicants from within the PEA for Tharwa, but also, very gratifyingly, a number of families outside of the PEA also want to come to Tharwa next year, which is what gives us the number of 13, which I think speaks very well for the reputation and support for that preschool.

Ms Efthymiades: Mr Davis, you are well aware as our local member that Tharwa is a preschool adjunct to Charles Conder School. What Ms Haire has just spoken about is that Charles Conder School has had a strong and growing reputation and is attracting quite a lot of interest. The fact that 13 applied to go there shows that there is an interest in a preschool offering there. We are really beholden to that level of interest, to retain or not, because you would not want to require people to travel somewhere that they were not keen to travel for a 15-hour-a-week program. The fact that there is 13 is fantastic. It affirms the minister's commitment around no closures. It has never been closed; it has just not been occupied by a preschool program in recent years, but it will be in 2023. I think that is strongly encouraging. The connection to Charles Conder is really critical in all of that.

MR DAVIS: Just to clarify: there were only 13 applications and all 13 applications were accepted? I am interested—I know it is early days—whether there are any early signs, based on population modelling or what the school is telling you, about the 2024-2025 program? Do we see it staying around for a long time?

Ms Efthymiades: As Ms Haire said, a number of those will be what might be considered. There are not really the priority enrolment areas for preschools; they are connected to their primary school. But, in the Tharwa area, there were about half a dozen. The rest have come from nearby but not within. It will depend on the decisions of the families that are within, if you understand what I mean. The population projections are not enormous, but, if there is interest from the families, then we would see it continue. That is all I can say at this point. Once you have the program startup again and the energy comes back, then it will be interesting to see. But we cannot require people.

MR DAVIS: I will keep promoting it. Thank you.

DR PATERSON: Thank you very much. In the recent budget, there was a \$156 million package for substantial upgrades and modernisation of Narrabundah, Garran and Strathnairn schools. I was just wondering if you can detail the highlights of that funding package and what are going to be some of the outcomes in those communities.

Ms Berry: Thank you very much for that question. I might start with Narrabundah College. Narrabundah College is going through a significant rebuild. We took the time to consult with the community about what they wanted and what their aspirations were for that site and for that school. Part of that planning work was about demolishing and removing some old buildings that were no longer fit for purpose and had some really challenging issues around management of asbestos. We demolished those buildings safely and put in modular learning units. It was called the Village. I went out and met with the students about that new campus that they were working on as a temporary measure while we work with the community about what that school's aspirations are for regrowth, rebuild and refresh. It was a really great little community of modular learning centres that worked really well for that school community. It is a very old school. These were very fresh and modern modular learning units. Those were put in place temporarily. We are now at the next part of the planning around the rebuild and the refresh of that school community.

The next one is Garran. Of course, Garran is also a very old school. I think it is a 60-year-old school. Of course, we are seeing more population growth within that region and—particularly, given the significant investment the ACT government has made in the hospital expansion as well—we are seeing a much greater need for an expansion and more permanent facilities and upgraded facilities within the Garran school. Again, we are working closely with that school community about what they see in the future for that school and how that school would look. The plan for that school will be demolition of the old school at the same time as we are building a new school right next door to it, adjacent to the Garran oval—I think it is a dry-land oval. That is the broad plan for that school site.

Then, of course, Strathnairn will be a brand-new school in West Belconnen, from early

childhood to year 6. This has been a significant build and investment by the ACT government for a new build area and to build a new school, but, also, making sure that it is built by women. It has a management team of women and has a requirement that every subcontractor has to have a female tradie on board. So it already has a story before it has started. That is a really important part of a school's journey from when they start—that it has a story before it is even built. That is a significant part of the history of this school and of Strathnairn. I can get Mr Matthews to provide some more detail if there is any.

Mr Matthews: I guess just quickly building on the minister's answers I think what we are continuing to do with our schools is both give a new lease of life to some of our really great old schools like Garran. We have talked about Lake Narrabundah College and also Majura Park and continue to build greenfield schools in Strathnairn and Whitlam of course was supported in this budget as well.

So, the total investment in the forward years is I believe it is \$665 million and the total project value is \$821 million worth of capital investments. So, very significant investments in school in infrastructure by the ACT government and continuing to make sure our schools are fit for purpose and are modern learning environments no matter where they are located in the ACT.

DR PATERSON: Thank you. We have talked a lot about the new schools and about the integration with the community and having that mixed model of community facility and school. I was wondering is that taken into consideration as well with these modernisation projects—that there are changed needs of the community?

Ms Berry: Yes, very much so. We are definitely hearing from the communities around the Garran area and Narrabundah the need to ensure that those facilities can be used for communities outside of school hours. I mean, the priority is that they are education and teaching facilities, and that needs to be remembered by everybody.

However, over the years it has made our schools much more vibrant by having more use of facilities when they would ordinarily be cold and dark and quiet; at times when other people can make use of them. So, making sure that our new schools obviously have those facilities has been something that we have been very focused on.

Including in the refresh and upgrades of our older schools, making sure that when we build newer facilities they can be used and are accessible by communities. I think some of our old schools have been challenging for community members to access just because of the nature of the way the schools are built and the difficulty in accessing them separately of the classes that might be around them.

We have been able to work with the Education Directorate and Sport and Recreation around putting in keypads and things like that, so the community and other users of these facilities can access them outside of school hours, without having to go and get the key from the school and the building service officer having to lock up the facility or whatever.

We did pilot that across a number of schools a few years ago before COVID. That is the kind of thing we want to make sure we have in our new schools but in our upgrade

and refresh of some of our older schools to make sure that they are accessible as well.

DR PATERSON: A final supplementary. I have written to you about this issue around afterschool care at Garran Primary and the fact they just cannot offer it at the moment or very limited offering. Is afterschool care taken into consideration in new planning given that we have more working parents these days and it is kind of critical to women's participation in the workforce.

Ms Berry: Yes, it is. One of the challenges of the older schools is the schools are not built for that purpose because that was never a consideration that women would be going to work. But now that is the case. Families are expecting more flexibility around how they can provide education, but then also go into the out-of-school hours care after education so that they can complete a full day at work.

Those are the kinds of things we need to make sure that our spaces are big enough to be able to provide those out-of-school hours care. The way our new schools are built makes that much more accessible. More open plan floor spaces mean they could be used, if it is planned well, for out-of-school hours care.

The older schools are more challenging because of the physical nature of the layout of the school, but for newer schools there are much more opportunities.

THE CHAIR: Supplementary time, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: I accept this one might be best taken on notice. The 22 demountables in this budget, can you give me a total number of demountables across all schools and how many have been in situ for more than five years?

Ms Berry: I think we have provided that information.

MR HANSON: Have you provided how many have been in situ for more than five years?

Ms Berry: I think we did and I think that has been provided in—

MR HANSON: Twenty-two to that list? Is there a breakdown in this budget of where those 22 are going? Has that been provided?

Ms Haire: In this budget, this budget provides for three new module learning centres and the relocation of eight existing module learning centres.

MR HANSON: So, there is eight existing from—okay.

Ms Haire: Yes. As you would appreciate shifting a module learning centre from one site to another is not as simple as just putting it on the back of a truck and moving it. It is actually an expensive and complex exercise.

MR HANSON: And where they are going from, and where they are going to, is that listed somewhere?

Ms Haire: At this stage, while the enrolments are still being finalised, we have not finalised the list of where the 11 module learning centres will be. But that is something that will be concluded over the next couple of months in preparation for the start of the 2023 school year.

MR HANSON: So, we will get it down the track. In terms of, particularly the older schools where a multi-use of space like a library has been adapted to become a classroom, do you have an analysis across the schools where that that has happened and what the space is that has been lost? Just to get an idea, in school X the library is now being used as a classroom, so we can get an appreciation of when that might be reclaimed by a module learning unit or however it is going to be done. Do you look at that?

Ms Haire: We do look at the use of all spaces in the schools, Mr Hanson. I think some of the questions that you are asking we responded to in relation to the recent infrastructure inquiry. So, that might be partly why we think we have already provided it to you.

MR HANSON: I was not on that committee, so I may not have seen that.

Ms Haire: I have just realised that. What we provided to that committee was the age, and how long modular learning centres had been in different locations.

MR HANSON: Did you provide a list of schools where multi-use of space, either hallways, or be it a library, being used as a classroom? Can you get that to the committee so we can across the schools understand—

Ms Haire: I would probably have to take that question on notice, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Yes, that is great. I understand.

Mr Matthews: Perhaps the only addition I can make to that answer, Mr Hanson, is that again the committee inquiry can come with some recommendations around school capacity assessments is what we call that. So, how do we determine what spaces are available for use by classroom or as a classroom. And what are the sort of generalist spaces, what are the specialist learning spaces, and things like libraries.

So, the government will respond to those recommendations in that inquiry report at the beginning of September as well. We do make those school capacity assessments every two years generally, for every school, and more often as required, if we are worried about space utilisation or have a particular reason.

And, of course, over the journey a whole bunch of spaces can be repurposed in schools.

MR HANSON: Sure. I suppose what I am trying to get to is: are there schools out there that have lost their library—they have lost it for a while as it has been used as a classroom? So, then I can follow up and say, “Well, what is the plan?” Are they going to get a demountable? Or is there going to be a new school built to take the pressure off there. So that I can get to that level of detail.

If you have got that information for this committee that would be great. If you have already provided to the other committee that should be a reasonably simple process.

Ms Berry: I think it would be accessible online.

MR HANSON: I just do not know if it has been provided or not. If it has, that is great.

Ms Berry: The information we have provided is available online, so you can check that out.

I think we can give an example which might help, Mr Hanson. Sometimes it will be the case that a school library, let's use that as example, might be utilised temporarily while there are some other upgrades or action happening within the school. That could be the case. Then the school library might be returned at another point on the journey.

We will see what we can get for you. How about that? We will see what we can get you. I encourage you to look at the information that we have provided already to the infrastructure committee hearings. If we can provide some examples that are helpful for you then we will look into that.

MR HANSON: Thanks.

Ms Berry: We will take that part of the question on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I might flick across to Mr Davis for a supplementary.

MR DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

I think some members and I think some in the community would benefit from an explanation of what separates a demountable from a modular learning unit. I think there are some schools that would have classroom facilities they would describe as demountables, but there are some impressive new modular learning buildings being built.

Can I get an understanding of what separates, what we are buying now, as modular learning units from the demountable classrooms of the past people think of when they picture demountables?

Ms Berry: I think it is really just a description. So, if you google "modular learning units", you will see that they are the demountables and transportables of yesteryear. But the definition "modular learning units" is the definition that is used now broadly across the country for these particular buildings. In the past they have had a range of different names, depending on their uses, within schools, transportables or demountables. With other areas that use these kinds of facilities, they have other names, in shearing sheds and places like that.

MR DAVIS: Is it the name that has just changed or are the building actually different and provide different teaching and learning environments?

Ms Haire: Both things are true at the same time, Mr Davis, in a funny kind of way.

MR DAVIS: Okay.

Ms Haire: As the minister said, the word has changed over time and we often laugh about the fact there are about five different words that are in current usage for exactly the same thing. So, portables, transportables, modular learning units.

THE CHAIR: Relocatable units.

Ms Haire: Relocatable. Someone help me with the fifth. It is all the same. We are referring to the same thing. However, what has changed, is that the design of whatever we might call them, the design for the modular learning units now and the quality of them is substantially better than the ones of the past.

That is not what has precipitated the name change. It has been in response to the absolutely appropriate expectations that whether a child is in a classroom or whether a child and a teacher is in a classroom in the main part of the school or in a temporary learning site, it should be climate-controlled. It should be, to the extent possible, environmentally sustainable. It should have the same access to wet areas, et cetera, so the design and quality of these modern units is much greater than the ones that I certainly went to when I was at school, which were hot little boxes. You were lucky if you could open the window. We certainly did not have air conditioning and heating.

So, what we have seen is an improvement in quality. In particular, in the last several years, there have been real leaps and bounds in the design and the quality. At the same time, as you point out, a confusing array of names for exactly the same thing.

MR DAVIS: Could I ask, is this—

Ms Berry: I just want to answer that, Mr Davis. You will see that the homes that have been built to provide the families in Lismore who have been displaced as a result of the floods up there are called modular homes. We know now that there is a real business for modular homes because they are quick, easy to build, have about a 30-year life and they are very high quality, the same as our modular learning units. So, I think there has been a shift in the language, which is probably about the design, but they are all the same thing.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I mean, your second one was a clarifying question, yes.

MR DAVIS: Okay. Well, this is almost certainly an on-notice question and I would be surprised if you had it now. What I think might benefit the community and the community more broadly is some analysis about the amount of demountable modular learning units that we have and the year of their original construction. So, if you have that in front of you, that would be good.

Ms Berry: Yes, Mr Davis, I think we provided that to the infrastructure inquiry. I will just check.

MR DAVIS: I sat on that inquiry. We did not necessarily have a breakdown of the age

of our assets, but that might be useful to separate between those older facilities people picture and the ones we are procuring now.

Ms Berry: Certainly. I will take that question on notice.

MR HANSON: Recommendation 13 from the task force report and also in a recent inquiry into the teacher quality in the ACT public schools talks about class sizes. The recommendation says there is going to be clear advice and guidance to ensure a systemwide implementation of the class size policy, class size procedures and what constitutes excessive class size.

So, what is the policy and what are the procedures? Does class size vary from age group to age group, with the nature of the class? In practice, it is just going to say this is what the policy is? The recommendation is: this is what the policy is. Would it make any difference on the ground? How does it actually affect what is happening on the ground with split classes and oversized classes?

Ms Berry: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Well, you have asked quite a number of questions there. I think the first one would be probably explained through the requirements under the enterprise bargaining agreement, as far as class sizes currently and how they are implemented across our schools. Mr Matthews, do you have some detail on that one for Mr Hanson?

Mr Matthews: Yes, Minister and Mr Hanson. Firstly, the class size policy is available on our internet site. So you can google that, as I have just done, just to make sure I have the information correct. It is an agreed policy with the Australian Education Union which is linked to our enterprise agreement. Essentially, what the class size requirements do is by year level. It has a number which the class size should not exceed those following number of students.

MR HANSON: Can I just interject there and I apologise. In the inquiry into the ACT Auditor-General's report number 6 of 2021: *Teaching quality in ACT public schools*.

Mr Matthews: Yes.

MR HANSON: And this has just been released on page 36.

Mr Matthews: Yes.

MR HANSON: The report says, "The AEU indicated that this issue is exacerbated by the lack of a cap on class sizes in the enterprise agreement." So, that report is saying that the enterprise agreement does not have a cap in it.

Ms Berry: Before he goes there, I think you did ask about what the class size requirements were now. So, it would be good to get that on the table, so that that is clear. Then we can talk to what the education union has suggested in the task force and what we need to do in that space.

MR HANSON: Yes, I am a bit confused here.

Ms Berry: If you would not mind, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Because Mr Matthews was saying that that cap is in the enterprise agreement, but this report is saying it is not.

THE CHAIR: Well, we might let—

Mr Matthews: I am happy to go further, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Yes.

Mr Matthews: I am sorry if I was being longwinded; I was just doing the long run up. Basically, as the person who was the lead negotiator of the education enterprise agreement, my clear recollection is what the class size policy is and what is known as an “agreed policy” between the union and the employer and it is linked to the enterprise agreement. So, it is an agreed policy between us and the union, and I cannot comment on the sorts of references that you are talking about.

MR HANSON: Yes.

Mr Matthews: But there is an agreed policy and it is available on the website.

MR HANSON: And that has a cap on it?

Mr Matthews: It has. I can read it to you, if you would like me to, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Sure, yes.

Mr Matthews: It says:

5.1 For the purposes of this Policy, a class is defined as a group of students for which the classroom teacher has responsibility for instruction, assessment and reporting.

5.2 Class sizes should not exceed the following number of students:

5.2.1 Preschools	22
5.2.2 K to Year 3	21
5.2.3 Years 4 to 6	30
5.2.4 Years 7 to 9	32
5.2.5 Year 10	30
5.2.6 Year 11 and 12	25
5.2.7 Learning Support Units	8
5.2.8 Learning Support Units Autism	6
5.2.9 Introductory English Centres	15

Then the policy goes on to describe, what do you do if you need to vary that policy. So, for example, let us say that there is a group of year 3 students, where there are 21 students in that classroom and again to cite your background before, Mr Hanson, there is a defence family that gets posted to Canberra midyear and they rock up to their local public school and want to attend that school.

So, there would be one extra student that would exceed that guideline in that case. What the policy provides for is negotiation with that teacher about taking on that student in these circumstances and the additional support that would be provided to that teacher in recognition that there is an extra student under the guidelines.

So, what the guidelines do is make it very clear what the benchmark should be in terms of the way that we plan and fund our classes every year. But of course, there is a lot of movement with students through the years. It can be as simple as the example that I have given, where you have one or two more students that do enrol during the year and you have to accommodate them in an appropriate year.

MR HANSON: Sure. What I am to understand is what the union is saying is that there have been instances where single teachers have been obliged to deal with 50 or 60 students at a time. I mean, who makes the decision that that class goes ahead. Is that in the policy?

Mr Matthews: The issue that you are talking about, Mr Hanson, would be described by the union as well as the issue of split and combined classes. So, it is a question of, at any given time, how many students are in front of a teacher. I would make a very clear distinction which is in the policy I have just read to you, which is the class size requirements are that a teacher has responsibility for instruction, assessment and reporting.

So, that is the full responsibility for the learning of that child. That includes meeting with their parents and supporting any wellbeing. When you talk about those other examples, if there are situations where there is a combined or collapsed class, then the teacher that is supervising those students does not take responsibility for all of those functions of teaching and learning and student wellbeing.

MR HANSON: So, it is sort of ad hoc crisis-managed because there are not enough teachers that day.

Ms Berry: Chair, we are running out of time.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Matthews: It is unplanned in that way and that is understood to be the case, and we seek to minimise that, and that is the agreement that we have with the union. The fact that we were able to agree with this guideline suggests very clearly that we think they are the ideal class size limits to work within, and, indeed, of course many of them are below those limits as well. We think it is really important to have that as a line in the sand. These are proxy for the workload generally. Of course, schools are very dynamic environments, especially during the pandemic, and, during the course of the day, there can be teacher availability issues for a range of reasons.

THE CHAIR: Is there a clarifying question that you want to ask now?

MR HANSON: Yes. It is relevant. You explained that well. Thank you very much. On class limits—let us say it is 22, and then, by negotiation, it can take on more—is there an amount that is a cap, so you cannot take more than five more for any specific class?

It seems a bit like that limit might be 22, but you can negotiate as many as you want to come in or is that capped?

Mr Matthews: There is some further detail of that in the policy, Mr Hanson. In general, we want to stay within those limits. We are just talking about sensible flexibility in the circumstances that I talked about. There would not be any value in splitting another class—taking those now 22 year 3 students and turning them into two classes of 11. But, clearly, once we get to a point where that is required, where we need to change the class composition, we would do that.

MR HANSON: But there is no formal number as such, as done—

DR PATERSON: Chair, this is not a debate. Can we move on?

THE CHAIR: Yes. I do think you had identified that there is no formal number in terms of splitting a class. You have mentioned that there are caps of up to 30 or 32 students, but I guess the question was getting to: when does that get split? Obviously, you have no official number in relation to that.

Ms Berry: Thank you, Chair. This is work that we are working on with the education union, through the taskforce and through their recommendations. This is not something that Jeremy has all of a sudden identified as an issue. We know it is an issue. You are too late. We have got it. It is written down in the taskforce.

MR HANSON: Too late? What does that mean?

Ms Berry: And we are going to continue to work with the union to address the issues that they have raised with us. Those issues have been exacerbated by COVID. I know you all do not think COVID is still around, but it is. So we want to make sure that we address those issues and that we also have our schools ready for future school students and teachers to enter in a way that we have addressed these issues, so they cannot arise again. The issues are there. We are not hiding away from them. They are in public, we have announced it, we have released the paper, and you have copies of it or you can google it. It is the same with the policy that Mr Matthews has alluded to as well. You can google that. Any other questions that we have taken on notice we will provide.

We are not hiding from any of these issues. They exist, we understand them better now because of the work that we have been doing with the education union. It is not often that a union will work collaboratively with an employer, understandably, and they will continue to advocate and hold us to account. What I can say is this relationship, in developing this report, has been a positive one. We understand the issues better—all of us—we have got the data to back it up. Now we need to get on with implementing the work that we need to do to respond to the recommendations, which we will do and we have committed to, and I commit to doing that, again, here.

THE CHAIR: In relation to whether Mr Hanson was late to this matter, I think that the government still has not necessarily addressed this anyway. They are still working through that process now.

Ms Berry: Read the report. My goodness!

THE CHAIR: Still working through the process. Mr Hanson is simply asking questions in relation to—

Ms Berry: Yes. Mr Chair, can we move on? Please.

MR HANSON: I can ask a question. Surely—

THE CHAIR: Yes. Yes, please. Committee members and Mr Hanson—

MR HANSON: I am done.

THE CHAIR: I was making a comment then, and now we are going to go to a substantive, to Mr Davis.

MR DAVIS: Given the time, I am happy to go back to committee members.

THE CHAIR: Mr Braddock, do you have a question?

DR PATERSON: I do.

THE CHAIR: Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: I would like to understand the \$3.5 million in the budget for improved ventilation at public schools and more on how we are keeping kids and teachers safe from COVID.

Ms Berry: Thank you for that question. It is important to remember that we still are in a health pandemic and we need to make sure that there is appropriate ventilation across our schools.

Some of that funding is about making adjustments in our schools to ensure there is better ventilation. The advice that we have, and this still remains, is that fresh air ventilation is the best form of air movement through closed spaces to keep people safe and minimise the spread. That, combined with masks, social distancing and good hand and personal hygiene, is part of that response as well.

Of course, when you open a window in winter in Canberra, it is cold, so you have to pump the heating up and that costs money. So some of that funding has gone towards addressing the increase in electricity bills that schools will experience as a result of responding to this and having good COVID safety plans in place.

Ms Haire?

Ms Haire: When the lockdown finished in Canberra in October last year, the government committed additional funds to ensure that schools were safe, which included funding for masks, hand sanitiser, ventilation, shade structures, and a range of other things. Ventilation was an important element of that. I will ask Ms Simmons to outline how ventilation fits within our COVID safety plans and, also, our indoor air quality plans, which we have in each of our schools.

Ms Simmons: Thank you, Ms Haire. I acknowledge that I have read the privileges statement. Ventilation plans are part of our COVID safety management plans. We have an overarching COVID safety management plan, as Mr Matthews has referred to earlier. We developed that centrally. Each individual school has consulted with their community around the development of what is in their particular COVID safety management plan. The ventilation plans are part of that. All of our schools have their ventilation plan published on websites. They are constantly updated and looked at in context, as the minister just talked about, in relation to the weather.

Some of that is about opening the windows; some of it is about looking at the rooms that are being used in some situations. Some rooms might not be used and other rooms are used. That has been part of the overarching plan: to support ventilation in our schools over the past 12 months. We have also had outdoor learning areas utilised.

We have other measures that we have put in place, not just for ventilation. As the minister has indicated, we have a number of measures: the use of masks in schools, 1.5-metre distancing, and we have measures in place for outdoor events. There is a COVID safety plan that has been put in place for just about every event that occurs in a school. I think it is important to note that ventilation plans should not be looked at in isolation. They are part of a bigger package and the suite of options that we use in our schools.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary?

DR PATERSON: There is also substantial funding in the budget for cleaning. Is there an increase in the budget for cleaning? Is that also in reference to COVID safety measures?

Mr Matthews: Dr Paterson, the commitment in the budget is not directly linked to COVID. During the pandemic so far, based on health advice, we have additional day cleaning in schools, and that was based on, as I said, the chief health officer's recommendation that we should do high-frequency touch-point cleaning throughout the day.

That advice did change at the end of last year or earlier this year when we maintained extra day cleaning services through the first half of the school year. We have recently reduced those activities and moved to more night-cleaning based work, which is what this budget initiative is about.

The budget initiative represents a significant expansion of the night cleaning service. It does allow for the COVID requirements to be met, because there is still the work that is being done at night on the high-frequency touch-point cleaning and the focus on hygiene and hygiene management in schools. The additional funding that has been provided through the budget, a substantial commitment of \$17.3 million over four years, is about making sure we can continue to maintain the quality and the safety of all of our schools through really great cleaning.

The school cleaning service is something that we are all really proud of in the Education Directorate. They became a resource service at the beginning of 2020, of all years, in terms of the outset of the pandemic. It has been so fantastic to be able to have a team of

people working with us, which at various times has been between 300 to 500 individuals, and it is that base funding level of around 300. They have been so flexible about working to meet the needs of not only our schools but also a lot of the community users that have been mentioned here today. The school cleaning service is there literally at 10 and 11 o'clock on a Sunday night, making sure that schools are clean and safe for the community and the school the following day.

They have added so much richness to our directorate as well in terms of their cultural diversity and all of the other skillsets and their work histories that they bring to the directorate. This investment here is essentially making sure we can continue to enhance that night cleaning service.

And it does. It is funding for just under 43 and a half full time equivalence, but most of that, cleaners do work part time and will allow us to provide additional cleaning hours in the highest priority schools, as well as continue to meet the COVID requirements.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a supplementary you want to ask in the next 30 seconds?

DR PATERSON: I am good—

Ms Berry: Chair, before you finish up, if you would not mind? Just in response to the concerns that Mr Davis raised, on behalf of the roller derby group—and so he can save his breath for tomorrow and save some ink on paper—I will ask sport and rec to reach out to roller derby to understand the concerns that they have raised around their financial viability. They may be able to help them with some advice, also some support.

MR HANSON: And we get an Assembly team?

MR DAVIS: Beg your pardon?

MR HANSON: An Assembly roller derby team.

MR DAVIS: It is the only time we will be on the same team, Jeremy!

MR HANSON: Fair enough.

THE CHAIR: On that note, that brings us to the end of this session. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Ms Berry, and officials, for their attendance today.

If witnesses have taken any questions on notice, could you please provide answers to the committee secretary within five working days.

We will now adjourn, have a break for 15 minutes, and recommence at 3.15 pm.

Hearing suspended from 3 to 3.15 pm.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane, Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Chan, Ms Yu-Lan, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

Cubin, Ms Derise, Executive Branch Manager, Licensing and Registrations

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Ng, Mr Daniel, Acting Executive Group Manager, Legislation, Policy and Programs

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to the fourth session of today's hearing of the estimates committee. We will be hearing from Mr Shane Rattenbury, the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister for Gaming, and officials. Following that, we will hear from Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith, the Minister for Families and Community Services, and officials.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live.

When taking a question on notice, it will be useful if witnesses use these words: "I will take that as a question taken on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Before you speak, can you also acknowledge that you agree to that privilege statement?

As we are not inviting opening statements, we will proceed straight to questions. I will handball my substantive over to Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Thank you. I want to go to the legislative changes that are coming, and certainly have been flagged, in regard to the central monitoring system and bet and load-up limits. Minister, I understand, based on a conversation that you and I had, and certainly on a communication that has gone to a number of clubs, that you were set to table legislation around bet and load-up limits, and potentially related to a central monitoring system, as per your discussion paper. I understand that you were set to table some of that legislation in the last sitting, but you made a decision not to proceed. Can I ask why you decided not to proceed?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly, Mr Parton. The government envisages a number of tranches of legislation relating to the proposed reforms on load-up limits and bet limits. That was flagged in the discussion paper. The first tranche of that legislation seeks to put in place a mechanism that requires that new poker machines in the ACT can only be capable of \$5 bet limits. The thinking behind that legislation is, to colloquially put it, to stop making the problem worse, to make sure that no new machines are coming in, and that

there is not lost investment—those sorts of matters. I had proposed to introduce that legislation in the last sitting.

I was surprised that the venues had very strong feedback on that. They felt that this was not consistent with the consultation process that is currently underway. I do not share that view. I think that this was quite straightforward legislation that did not impact on the shape-out of the way the consultation process goes, or how the government makes a final decision around the model for bet and load-up limits. Given that the venues—particularly, the clubs—felt that this was inconsistent with the consultation model, I decided to defer it. For the government, it does not matter. We are trying to be very clear with the clubs and provide certainty about new machines.

MR PARTON: On the broader legislative changes that have been flagged in the discussion paper, I want to give credit where it is due, because you have succeeded in doing something that no other gaming minister has done for more than a decade—that is, you have absolutely united the entire club sector. You brought them together as one with that discussion paper, because they are united against the mooted legislation!

With respect to the ClubsACT response to the discussion paper, I will pull one line out of it. It says:

This approach, if implemented, will have an immediate, direct impact on the viability of clubs. Venues will close. These are implications that the members of the Legislative Assembly who are party to the parliamentary agreement could not have been aware of when they committed to this approach.

Do you share the view of ClubsACT that venues will close if indeed this broader legislative agenda is implemented?

Mr Rattenbury: I think that the selective use of that quote does not reflect the conversation that is taking place between the government and clubs. The government took a proposition out early in our consideration. As you know from previous conversations, we sought independent external advice on the most effective way to implement load-up limits and bet limits. We put that out in the discussion paper very early in our consideration, and I have been very up-front with the venues in saying that this is the government's initial position, and we are open now to their input. We were very clear that we intended to deliver \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits. We have also indicated a bit of flexibility in how we get there, because there could be more or less effective ways to do that.

I think that your use of that particular quote points to some of the venues coming back and raising concerns with a particular model. The clubs have said to me that they agree with us on bet limits and load-up limits. They have concerns about this particular approach, and that is why we are consulting with them.

MR PARTON: ClubsACT have estimated that there would be an up-front cost of \$70 million for just the machine and other systems upgrades required to turn on a central monitoring system. Who is paying for that? I know that, in part, you will answer by talking about seeking to defray costs of the implementation of this. You got feedback, because the clubs have told you how wildly optimistic that is, and that it is not going to

work, so who is going to pay for it?

Mr Rattenbury: I do not necessarily accept that figure. I think that the BMM paper identified implementation costs far lower than that. This work needs to continue over the coming months. We are establishing a technical working group to continue to work on the details. We need to make sure that we are talking about the same things. I do not share that analysis. I think we have all heard the notion of an ambit claim. We will keep working through the details here and see where we get to.

DR PATERSON: Minister, I have also been speaking to the clubs about this issue. From my perspective, there seems to be an issue that there is no long-term plan for clubs in this, in terms of the number of poker machines. What are we working towards? Their concern is about spending all of this money on machines when, in 10 years time, the policy may be no more machines in the ACT. They have a real concern about where things are going and there being no long-term plan.

MR PARTON: A fair question.

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is fair to say that the government has laid out its plan in the parliamentary agreement. It is very clear. This is the clearest long-term strategy that has ever been laid out in the ACT for poker machines. We have been clear with the clubs on the number of machines we expect to have through the course of this parliamentary term. Certainly, in the conversations I have had with the clubs around this reform, I have indicated to them, as part of the conversation that we need to have, that we need to ask: what reforms do we want to make now so that we do not have to come back to this in a few years time? For example, do we want to design a system that enables cashless gaming? That is where many people think things are going.

I am endeavouring to work with the clubs to ensure that we deliver powerful harm minimisation, whilst at the same time seeking to future-proof ourselves as much as possible as a community in what is a fast-paced, moving environment, in the sense that a lot of people are uncertain about where the technology is going in this space.

DR PATERSON: Just in terms of the consultation on this discussion paper, I think I saw online it finished in June. We have already had questions on the delay in implementation as a result of some of the things that came out of the consultation. Is there going to be a public release? When will the government release its position on its consultation?

Mr Rattenbury: There are two elements to that. In terms of the delay in implementation, there is no delay in implementation. The further bill is a gesture of goodwill to indicate that ongoing consultation process. That is because, from the government's point of view, it is a bit immaterial.

If the clubs decide to invest in a poker machine that does not comply with that new legislation in the next few months, that is on them. I have been very clear with them, if they choose to do that, they cannot expect compensation from the government, because we have been very clear about where we are going. If they make that investment decision, that is their choice and it is entirely on them.

In terms of your specific question, we intend to release—I listed them before, and they will be publicly available. I certainly intend, as much as possible, to publish the submissions that go with that. We will just need to clear that with the providers of those submissions, of course. I am sorry, there was the latter part of your question.

DR PATERSON: When will that report be released?

Mr Rattenbury: In the coming months. I do not have an exact time frame. As we touched on earlier, we now also have a technical working group established where we continue to work on the details. So, whilst there was a closing date for the consultation, we have been clear that the discussion goes on as we seek to work out ways through what is a very complex set of technical questions around implementation.

DR PATERSON: Can I ask the technical expertise of the technical working group? Are they technicians or are they club CEOs?

Mr Rattenbury: We are putting the final details of that group together. I probably should have said “we are establishing” as opposed to “we have established”. The venues are indicating they want their technical people to be on it, not the chair of the board or the CEO—probably the floor manager or somebody of that ilk so that it is really a detailed discussion about cabling, software, interoperability. All these questions have come up during the consultation process. We are now into, to a large extent an IT and gear conversation, if you like.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a supplementary?

DR PATERSON: I have got lots more.

THE CHAIR: You can go with another one.

DR PATERSON: Okay. In terms of the question, again, on who is going to pay, you mentioned no compensation for new machines that come in now. Is that a flag that there might be government compensation for older machines and their transition?

Mr Rattenbury: We do not have a definitive answer on that yet. I think that, firstly, we need to establish what the cost is going to be, over what time frame. The time frame is a really important part of this discussion. What the clubs are saying to the government is that, on average, they turn over 25 per cent of their machines every year, and they already had budgeted to pay for those new machines. I do not think there is any burden on government, if we work to a compatible time frame, to pay for what they already budgeted and planned to pay for anyway. That said, there potentially are costs involved in the scheme and we need to work with the sector to identify how those costs are paid for over time—some fair and just share arrangement between an industry which makes a significant profit out of these machines each year versus the government’s interest in delivering the public interest benefit of these harm minimisation measures.

THE CHAIR: Mr Braddock, on a substantive.

MR BRADDOCK: Just to change the topic, I am interested in how the EV strategy might have flow-on impacts in terms of the regulation of motor vehicle dealers or motor

vehicle repairers. Has there been any consideration or thought given to address that?

Mr Rattenbury: Not specifically, Mr Braddock. There have been a few pieces of work. Obviously, the government has indicated through the EV policy our intent to prevent new internal combustion engine vehicles from 2035.

Obviously, I think that is where a lot of the concerned questions are at the moment. The government has been upfront in saying we have not identified exactly the mechanism yet. We have 12 or 13 years to work with the sector to answer those questions, and we expect that consultation to go on over time.

The other thing is, on the sort of equal repair, maintenance side of things, we have started to work with CIT to enable the training courses for motor dealers and the like to train their staff. So that is sort of a different side to it.

Outside of that, no, I do not think there are any other specific regulatory matters, no.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

DR PATERSON: So in May, earlier this year, I put some questions on notice regarding the gambling incident register—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

DR PATERSON: —their reports, incident reports. Basically from 2018-19, so the pre-COVID year, to now, there has been a 25 per cent increase in reports on the gambling incident register. So the top four venues reporting, which I believe are one venue group, report thousands more than any other venue. So clearly there is a very major issue. Either the rest of the groups, club groups, are not reporting adequately—well, I think that is the issue and I would seek your thoughts on that.

Ms Chan: Thank you. I have read and understood the privilege statement.

Thank you for the question, Dr Paterson. In regard to the numbers, part of it is also—we have had—over the last couple of years, we have had an education campaign across the industry to help people to understand what the incident register is to be used for, helping them understand what their obligations are in terms to reporting, how to use the system.

So I think part of the increase can be attributed to people better understanding in the industry how do you use it and therefore reporting.

Yes, I guess some venues do use it at different rates, I suppose, depending on the size, the number of machines they have, the number of patrons they have through the doors.

I guess in terms of the level of reporting, the purpose of the incident reporting, and I guess the real benefits of the database and register, are that the venue can use it to get a picture of the patrons in their space. We have just upgraded the gamblers' exclusion database. It is much easier to use now. A club can actually see a particular patron. They can go in and see the entire history of incidents, exclusions, that kind of thing.

So in the previous system it was not as easy to get that one scene of one person. But the purpose of the database and the register is really to help clubs support their patrons by getting a holistic picture of that person, recording any interactions they have had with them, recording what signs of gambling harm they might have seen, recording if they have had a conversation with the person, what the outcome was. Therefore they have that record for their various teams of staff to help manage that patron.

DR PATERSON: See, I guess I would challenge that view in that it is in legislation and this is a harm minimisation strategy to record this information. I would argue it is actually very valuable information in terms of how we understand the harm that is going on in venues.

Venues, I think, would probably argue it is not for them, because they know their patrons, they know their clients. I think it is in the public interest that this information is reported and so what is the ACT government doing to ensure that most of the clubs are meeting their requirements under law to report this information? And will you make that more public?

Ms Chan: We do offer the training. Now that we have the updated database launched; it went live end of July. We now have a better picture. I guess it is easier to get data out of it. Easier to do some analysis. So that is certainly where we will be putting more effort.

We will also be working more with the clubs who perhaps have smaller numbers of incident reporting. Just to make sure they understand what they are supposed to be doing and checking if there are fewer incidents reported because there are fewer incidents, or if there is some other reason behind it, that education and engagement might help support with.

We have looked at what data we could publish. I guess what I would caution is that—for example, over a 10-year period, if one person excludes three times, another person excludes themselves once, it is very hard to tell which has been more effective. So I would urge caution with just looking at the raw numbers and drawing conclusions on the basis of that alone.

DR PATERSON: One of the venues that reports very highly provided me with their data that they report to ACT government. It is very clear as to which red flag measures are coming out really strongly. I would argue we can be looking at that data and using that data to go, okay, well clearly accessing ATMs in venues, for example, is—which is known as a red flag, like that is something that is coming up a lot, or there are other behaviours that are coming up a lot, which the clubs have, and they are providing to the government. I guess it seems like it just sits there, and nothing is being done with it.

So again, I ask, can we be using that data and reporting that data so that we can tap into what is going on in venues?

Ms Chan: It is only since 26 July the new system has gone live. So data is now starting to flow into that. Reporting and analysis is much, much, easier in the new system than it was in the old system. So that is certainly something we are looking at.

MR PARTON: Just briefly piggybacking off Dr Paterson's question there that touched on self-exclusion: Minister, I have to say I was a little taken aback to hear how lukewarm your response was to the suggestion from Clubs ACT that we move forward with the facial recognition scenario for self-exclusion.

I understand that the directorate, or at least, your people have been working with their people for some time. I have had a walkthrough of that system. I just wonder was that reported correctly. Are you as lukewarm or as cold on it as it appeared in the media?

Mr Rattenbury: I think what I have tried to convey, Mr Parton, is that I remain open-minded. I see positives in it, and I see concerns.

At the moment, the self-exclusion regime works by somebody being excluded from the whole venue. The way this has been endeavoured to set up is it will exclude people just from the gaming room. Now I see that as a positive, in the sense that people can still come to the venue, socialise, have a meal, go to a work function, whatever is on.

That is clearly a very attractive element of this because it maintains clubs as an important social venue whilst potentially acting against gambling harm.

I think on the other side of the equation, and I have been very transparent in saying this to the clubs, and I have said it to them directly, is that I think they will find many of their members are quite hesitant about the use of facial recognition technology and the way that data might be used.

So I guess my observation is, there is a lot of work still to be done. That is the primary point I have sought to make.

MR PARTON: Would you suggest that the current self-exclusion mechanism, and in particular the self-exclusion mechanism of the recognition of those faces by staff members trying to memorise them and go into photos, would you suggest that that is working well?

Mr Rattenbury: No. I do not think anybody thinks that is an ideal system. As you have touched on, it does rely on staff—both recognising the person in the first place, and then potentially having to intervene, and it is tricky just at a human level for a staff member to have to do that.

As part of the Ministerial Advisory Council, we have a working group who are looking at the self-exclusion regime to identify whether adjustments can be made.

In terms of then whether facial recognition technology is the answer, maybe that is where there is probably still a range of views. For example, if we were to move to a cashless gaming model, that could be another effective way. If you are using a card, you can just put a block on the card and people cannot access the machine.

The point I seek to make is there is probably a number of ways we could improve the self-exclusion regime, and as the way that technology is evolving, there is probably still an open question on that.

MR PARTON: Even with the card though, I would suggest Laurie Brown still would have found a way around it. I am not saying that with disrespect to her. I am just using her example as, she found ways to get around it. I would not have thought it would be— anyway, that is just a comment. I am happy to leave—

Mr Rattenbury: But I think your comment is a fair one, Mr Parton, in a sense that perhaps almost no system is foolproof in a sense—

MR PARTON: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: and that some people get so desperate, with their gambling problems, that they would go to an extent, if they wanted to beat the facial recognition technology, might they seek to wear sunglasses and a fake moustache to get into the venue. I mean, you know, I do not want to be ridiculous about this—

MR PARTON: No, no.

Mr Rattenbury: But people will seek to circumvent the models in a range of different ways.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On a substantive, Mr Parton?

MR PARTON: I am happy to take you up on that, Chair.

THE CHAIR: I am certain you are.

MR PARTON: Minister, the governing agreement between Labor and the Greens commits to moving forward with \$5 bet limits and \$100 load up limits. You have indicated in discussions earlier that at this stage of the game, although there were voices against that from club land, they are not too fussed about that now in terms of they are pretty much on board.

But at no point in that agreement is there mention of a central monitoring system. Why does the CMS form the centre piece of this new legislative push, given that it was not a part of the power sharing agreement?

Mr Rattenbury: Because, Mr Parton, of the independent technical advice that we got from BMM—so the government went out to somebody who does not sell poker machines, does not operate poker machines, but is an internationally recognised organisation that does evaluation of poker machines. So quite expert in this space but not attached to anybody and does not have a vested interest.

The independent advice they gave us was that the most cost effective and technically effective way to introduce bet limits and load up limits was to use a CMS as a backbone for that, to put it simply.

So that is the proposition the government has put out to the community and particularly

the sector. And that is being contested by some in the sector.

MR PARTON: Are you questioning that conclusion now? Does it appear, as we get further down the track, that there are other options to arrive at the same point?

Mr Rattenbury: Well we have been very open about that, in saying the government put forward at an early stage in its consideration, one option that had been put to us as the most technically and economically efficient option. We put that out there and we invited people to give us feedback. And we can use that feedback now.

MR PARTON: Aren't they. And just finally, with the introduction of the load up limits and the \$5 maximum bets, will \$50 and \$100 notes be allowed in machines?

Mr Rattenbury: That is one of the questions that people are giving us feedback on now. Some venues have put the view that if there is \$100 load up, does it really matter if you do it \$20 notes, or \$50 notes, or \$100 notes? It is a fair question. I have been open to the clubs in saying, well you put that through to us, because they say, not having to bring in \$20 notes by the truckload could be an economic saving for them. This could be part of the offsetting.

I will need to get advice on the other side of the equation whether there is any downside to that in risks from a gambling point of view. But on the face of it, it seems like a reasonable argument.

MR PARTON: Thank you, minister.

MR CAIN: Moving on from the gambling scenarios. Minister, in our last sitting week you would be aware the Chief Minister responded to my motion calling for the introduction of a fuel check app.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR CAIN: As you would remember as well, a recommendation from the 2019 inquiry was, and I quote, "to initiate a real time mandatory price monitoring scheme, similar to the fuel check scheme operating in New South Wales."

Minister, you and your colleagues voted down this motion. What have you done to action the recommendations that were agreed to, or agreed to in principle, from this 2019 committee?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Cain, the answer to that lies with the Chief Minister, who has had the lead on that issue since that 2019 inquiry.

MR CAIN: Any of your officers able to assist?

Mr Rattenbury: Well no because it has not sat with these agencies for responsibility. I believe it has sat predominantly with the Chief Minister.

But, Ms Cubin, do you happen to know anything?

Ms Cubin: I have read and I acknowledge the privilege statement. Thanks for your question, Mr Cain.

Just to provide a little bit more information, we have been engaging with our treasury colleagues with regards to the proposed fuel check. Just making some inquiries around the viability of that in the ACT. So there are definitely conversations happening.

MR CAIN: Supplementary to that, so you would be aware the Chief Minister indicated that the government had written to the New South Wales Premier, seeking a waiver of some of the licence and other fees that come with the New South Wales fuel check app, in order to make it more cost effective. Are you able to tell me when this engagement occurred?

Ms Cubin: From my perspective, no. Obviously because we are dealing with treasury colleagues who, as the minister advised, have the lead on this matter. But we are there to support them as they move forward on this initiative.

MR CAIN: Are you happy to take that question on notice?

Mr Rattenbury: I do not think so, Mr Cain. It was the Chief Minister who wrote that letter. So I think it is better that the Chief Minister and the treasury agency respond to that question.

MR CAIN: So in your consumer affairs portfolio of responsibilities you are not engaged with this discussion at all?

Mr Rattenbury: I take some interest in it. But as I have indicated to you clearly, the Chief Minister wrote that letter. So is it not for me to provide you with that letter.

MR CAIN: You take some interest, but not about correspondence from one Chief Minister to a New South Wales Premier. That seems a pretty low level of interest.

Mr Rattenbury: That is an editorial comment on your part, Mr Cain. The Chief Minister wrote the letter. If you want a copy of the letter, or you want to know the date of it, you should ask the Chief Minister.

MR CAIN: Thank you, Chair. Ethical investing is perhaps the banner for this line of questioning.

So minister, you mentioned in the Consumer Affairs and Minister for Gambling Budget Hearings session in October last year that you were undertaking an ethical investment lens on ACT government investments.

I note in January this year, the treasurer updated an amended policy. Was this upon your guidance after our last budget hearings session for consumer affairs, in which you said you were unaware the government held gaming company shares?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. After Mr Parton very helpfully drew that to my attention, I did raise the matter with the Chief Minister.

MR CAIN: What were the updates early this year to this policy document?

Mr Rattenbury: I would have to—it depends on the level of detail that you want, but it is probably best that I provide those to you in writing so that I do not misquote them.

MR CAIN: So you will take that on notice?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I will take that on notice.

MR CAIN: Thank you. I read an article from 2012 in which Treasurer Barr stated that an ethical lens of investment would be developed and would be a policy encompassing environmental, social, and governance issues when determining a framework for what to invest in.

The then Greens leader, Meredith Hunter, believed that the new policy did not go far enough. Do you believe that the current ACT shareholdings portfolio, as at 30 July this year, is invested ethically and responsibly?

Mr Rattenbury: I think the situation is that these concepts evolve over time. The filters that are placed on ethical investing do evolve. They do change. And so I think the ACT has come a long way. But I would hold the view that this will continue to change over time.

MR CAIN: And perhaps Chair, with your approval, just one more supplementary on that very question—

THE CHAIR: Okay. One short one. Yes.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

So according to the shareholdings of 30 June this year, the government has investments in Rio Tinto, Fortescue Metals, Northern Star Resources Limited, Pilbara Minerals and OZ minerals. Do these shareholdings pass the investment in—the ethical investment lenses of your government?

Mr Rattenbury: I feel that you are operating outside of my portfolio here and asking my personal opinion, Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: I will take that if that is what you—no, in your role as minister, overseeing significant areas of responsibility, do these shareholdings satisfy the policy of the Labor Greens government? Perhaps even for your own party.

Mr Rattenbury: That is what I mean. You are asking a matter of personal policy, not a ministerial question.

MR CAIN: So you have no ministerial oversight of any of these shareholdings or influence upon them?

Mr Rattenbury: The Treasurer takes the lead, as you have identified in your questioning. The Greens Party does have a view, but I am not sure that is the question

I am here to answer.

Clearly, we have very high standards when it comes to ethical investment. We, the Greens, will continue to make the case for further improvements in that list.

MR PARTON: I have a supplementary if that is possible?

Indeed, Minister, I can assist with an answer to a previous question from Mr Cain. To say that despite being raised in the hearings last year, the ACT—and despite you raising it at a government level, the ACT government still holds shares in poker machine manufacturer, Aristocrat Leisure. These are from ACT shareholdings as at 30 June this year. Aristocrat Leisure, Betmakers Technology, and Vici Properties, the owners of Caesars Palace.

So again, minister, just to avoid more embarrassment next year. It just sort of seems to me as though this government says one thing and does another. I have stated, on a number of levels, that the biggest bookmaker in town is the ACT government, is the Labor Greens government, in terms of being able to benefit from gambling—certainly with the latest increase in the latest POC gaming tax here.

How is it that we are fronting up at the next estimates hearings and those investments still remain?

Mr Rattenbury: Well Mr Parton, I do appreciate the delicious irony of coming into this place and having you give me a lecture on investments in gaming. But what we see is that since that last year, where that matter was brought to our attention, changes have been made. I cannot remember the exact wording of the criteria. It goes to a percentage of portfolio or revenue—and I cannot remember which, so I will have to—that is why I said, I would provide to Mr Cain on notice.

There is a definition there, and those companies—my recollection is, do not meet the new threshold. A percentage of their business that is involved in gaming falls below that cut off.

That is a standard approach to ethical investment filters. Is that it has got to the proportion of the business that is involved in those particular activities. It is a standard—

MR PARTON: But, Mr Rattenbury, Aristocrat Leisure—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR PARTON: I mean, honestly, what do you think forms—are you saying that because they own some apartments somewhere that—I just do not fully understand the answer to the question.

Mr Rattenbury: I was trying to explain to you generically how ethical investment filters work.

MR PARTON: Right.

Mr Rattenbury: I am no fan of Aristocrat Leisure, as you can imagine.

MR PARTON: Well I think perhaps—

Mr Rattenbury: I know you are a fan of Aristocrat Leisure, but I am not.

MR PARTON: I am not necessarily a fan of them. But I think it is abundantly clear that perhaps you should have consulted them more on the drawing up of the discussion paper. That is a whole other thing.

Thank you, Chair.

MR CAIN: Minister, you are a member of the executive review committee, are you not?

Mr Rattenbury: I am a member of the Expenditure Review Committee—

MR CAIN: Expenditure, sorry. Expenditure Review Committee.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR CAIN: Forgive me. Are you saying you have no view on ACT government investments in these companies that are being mentioned, whether it is gambling or mining?

Mr Rattenbury: That is not what I said, Mr Cain. I said that—that is not what I said.

MR CAIN: In your role in the ERC—

DR PATERSON: I have a substantive, Chair—

MR CAIN: —do you not have a view that you could present to us—

THE CHAIR: I think it is up there, Mr Braddock—

MR BRADDOCK: Dr Paterson has a supplementary. I think it is her turn given—

DR PATERSON: No, a substantive.

THE CHAIR: No, it is a substantive. So—

MR BRADDOCK: Okay. Then, substantive?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR CAIN: In which case, I will jump in.

THE CHAIR: Yes, it is up to Mr Braddock, for a substantive.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you. I have a question. In previous sessions we discussed the requirement to produce gambling harm information and materials in languages other than English. I was hoping to seek an update on what might have happened on that.

Ms Chan: Thank you. This is something we are working with the Gambling Support Service on. So there is some work underway. We also note that Gambling Help Online is something that every government in Australia contributes to. Gambling Help Online does have a range of materials available in different languages.

We are also starting to liaise with some of the multicultural support—community sector support organisations across the ACT who deal with, for example, CALD background community. So we are still doing some work on that space.

MR BRADDOCK: So would people who do not speak English but attend these clubs and may have a gambling problem, will they be aware of those materials being available on that website you just mentioned?

Ms Chan: We do have a, I guess, an education campaign with a particular focus on Gambling Harm Awareness Week. But we have been revamping our website. We have a number of materials, not yet in other languages, that we have revised and revamped. So that is something that is on our work program to do.

MR BRADDOCK: Okay. Do you have a timeframe on when those materials might become available?

Ms Chan: I am afraid I do not at the moment. We are still liaising with some of the support sector agencies.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Any supplementaries on Mr Braddock's substantive? No. If not, we will go to Dr Paterson, for a substantive.

DR PATERSON: Minister, my question is in respect to the Diversification and Sustainability Fund. So, from my knowledge it was established in 2019.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

DR PATERSON: So it is something—it has been running for a few years now. Can I get your perspective on what you see the point of that fund being and do you think it is meeting its purpose?

Mr Rattenbury: Well the Diversification and Sustainability Support Fund, which is quite a mouthful and is commonly known as the DSSF for simplicity, is designed to help Canberra's community clubs to develop initiatives which assist them to diversify their income. To support the sustainability of clubs and to contribute to projects that help reduce regulatory costs or improve the efficiency in administration.

Essentially it is so that they become less reliant on poker machine revenue and have a broader income base. Certainly the project—so many of the projects—well, all of the

projects that have been approved so far, have been approved in an attempt of meeting those objectives.

We have seen a range of different projects go through. Those range from kitchen upgrades, so people can improve their hospitality offering, through to the installation of solar panels on the roof, so that people can reduce their electricity costs.

I think the projects have met those goals that I spelled out to you. I expect to see that continue to evolve as clubs identify different ways to support their diversification.

DR PATERSON: So is it that 50 per cent of the fund goes on solar panel sustainability or it is just whatever projects are submitted?

Mr Rattenbury: The way it works is that there are two tiers of funding in the models. Applications for tier 1 funding are for an amount up to \$25,000 per application. They are available at any time. The thinking behind that one is a bit more about: perhaps they might want to get a consultant in to help them identify new strategies and the like.

Then there is an annual process. That is tier 2 funding, with a maximum amount of \$250,000 per application. That is a formal process where the panel sits and reviews them, because there are obviously larger amounts of money involved. There is not a quota, as such. There is not a predetermination of what can go to particular types of things. The panel sits down and judges the applications each year for those larger grants to see which ones most meet the objectives and whether there is value for money.

DR PATERSON: It does seem odd to fund a grants system for solar panels that really are subsidising electricity bills. These clubs have very high electricity bills because of the poker machines that they run. There is no imperative on clubs to actually properly diversify. Kitchen upgrades—that is not really moving away from poker machines. I am interested to understand: will there ever be a review of this fund and how it is working, or perhaps a repositioning of it to actually support clubs to move away from poker machines?

Mr Rattenbury: I think there are two parts to the observations you have made. Some of them are your interpretation—

DR PATERSON: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: and that is fine. The other part is: will there be a review of it? Yes, I would anticipate that somewhere down the line we would. There is no particular date at this point in time. But it is certainly the sort of conversation I would expect to have at a ministerial advisory council, over time, which contains membership from both the clubs and gambling reform advocates who might share some of those views.

As to your observation around upgrading the kitchen, there is scope for that to enable diversification revenue funding. At the moment, you might have an old kitchen and no-one comes to your restaurant anymore because it is not interesting for clients, but if you put in a new kitchen you can offer a new offering.

The Burns Club would be the most clear-cut example of that—not that that came from

the DSSF, but it is a great example. They put in their buffet that they have down there and it has been an enormous source of growth of revenue for their club, in a non-gaming machine stream. That is the sort of approach that we are seeking to encourage and replicate with this funding.

DR PATERSON: Okay. Did the Burns Club relinquish machines as a result of that? Is there any trade-off or funding for clubs to do this? It does not seem to be built into it to actually reduce machines or reduce the harm that they are causing.

Mr Rattenbury: The DSSF does not have a direct trade-off mechanism. You are correct to identify that. But you will also recall that the government reduced the number of poker machine authorisations in the ACT from more than 5,000 to under 4,000 in the last term, as a result of commitments in the 2016 parliamentary agreement. This term, the government has committed to reduce the number of poker machine authorisations further, to 3,500. So whilst there is not a direct correlation, clearly both things are being done.

DR PATERSON: Does that fund have a board?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, it does.

DR PATERSON: Yes. And who is on that?

Mr Rattenbury: It is chaired by Neville Stevens, who undertook some work for government in the 2016-20 term. The other members of it are Mr Brendan Egan, Ms Keri Pratt, and Ms Alice Tay.

DR PATERSON: Okay.

MR PARTON: If I could just piggyback on that—

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Thank you. In regard to, specifically, the building energy efficiency upgrade fund, how many community clubs are there in the ACT that have received funding from this fund? Are you able to tell me that here?

Mr Rattenbury: I can give you a ballpark, Mr Parton. I might take the rest on notice because that program is being administered by the environment directorate, who also answer to me in my other portfolio, but those officials are not here today. So we can either come back to it or I can take it on notice. I do not mind.

MR PARTON: Could you take it on notice.

Mr Rattenbury: I can tell you the broad numbers now, though. They are in my head.

MR PARTON: My office did actually ask, “Where can we ask this?” And they said, “It is with Shane on the 22nd.” So—

Mr Rattenbury: Sure. But what I can tell you is that, the last time I looked, 19 clubs

had had an assessment under the program.

MR PARTON: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: There is a lot of assessment involved. It is the folks from EPSDD who come out, talk to the club, have a look at their current set-up, have a look at their energy bills and provide them with advice. The clubs can then go ahead and apply.

MR PARTON: I think you might be getting some more information there. But if you are taking that on notice, that would be appreciated.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

MR PARTON: Can you also take on notice how much in grant funding is expected to be allocated in this budget year, please?

Mr Rattenbury: Sure; yes. What I can tell you is that there is \$5 million available under that program. Again, two clubs have already been approved to accept quotes. I do not have the exact numbers on how much is being spent under those particular quotes.

MR PARTON: All right. Finally—and I think part of this was answered with Dr Paterson's questions—I just want to know exactly what compliance checks are in place for the government to confirm that the works have been completed as per the grant.

Mr Rattenbury: Under the DSSF or the—

MR PARTON: The building energy efficiency upgrade fund?

Mr Rattenbury: Let me take that one on notice for you, because the officials who do the compliance are not here today.

MR PARTON: Yes, all right. Thank you.

MR CAIN: Minister, on that theme, how does the government inspect the completed work? How many have occurred and how much of the work has been inspected?

Mr Rattenbury: This is under the building energy efficiency upgrade fund?

MR CAIN: Correct.

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of how much has been completed, I think probably not very much yet, Mr Cain. It is a relatively new program. It was launched late last year or early this year. I just can't give you a date right now. As I said, we have now had 19 clubs that have been assessed. They have been given advice on the improvements that they could make to their venue, the likely cost and a benefit-cost ratio, and all of those sorts of things. Once they have done that, it is on them to them decide to make the formal application. As indicated, two venues so far have come back with that formal application and had approval for the release of money. I don't know that they have finished their installation yet.

MR CAIN: So what is an example of an improvement that you would see at a club site? If, say, the media went and visited the site, what would they actually see as a result of this expenditure?

Mr Rattenbury: The kinds of projects we anticipate are, for example, the upgrade of an air-conditioning system, from an old, inefficient one to one that is much more efficient and therefore reduces both energy use and energy bills. The upgrade of refrigeration systems is another. These can be very energy intensive and can also have implications due to the refrigerants they use, in terms of the global warming potential of the refrigerants. These are the kinds of projects. Basically, anything that uses energy, that can be upgraded or modernised, is eligible under the program. That would be the plain English way of putting it. There are a set of guidelines behind it, but that is the best plain English way that I could describe it to you.

MR PARTON: Minister, in the briefing that I took from your staff about the discussion paper on the CMS monitoring system and other things—and they were wonderful, your staff—

Mr Rattenbury: Good.

MR PARTON: They provided lots of information.

Mr Rattenbury: Excellent.

MR PARTON: Discussion around the CMS centred on it being a tool to battle money laundering in the ACT, and certainly the discussion paper itself mentions it on a number of occasions. Do you have any evidence that money laundering is actually taking place?

Mr Rattenbury: We have had strong indications from other jurisdictions where detailed work has been done that there is significant risk—in fact, I think evidence—of organised crime using poker machines to launder money. I think if we were to assume that it does not take place in the ACT, we would be somewhat naive. But there is no specific indication.

MR PARTON: But what is the current load-up limit in the ACT?

Mr Rattenbury: There is not one, if I remember rightly. I am just confirming that. Thank you. There is no load-up limit in the ACT currently.

MR PARTON: So once you move to a \$100 load-up limit, surely it is impossible—well, it is not impossible, but surely it would—

Mr Rattenbury: Painstaking might be the word, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: It would be extremely impractical for anyone to then use machines in the ACT to launder money because in the time that it would take you could almost earn more money working at Kmart or something—with the greatest of respect to staff at Kmart. We have a couple at our place. I guess what I am asking is: is it really about money laundering? Surely there is no evidence that that is taking place in the ACT? If

there is, I would be happy to hear about it.

Mr Rattenbury: I do not understand what your question is.

MR PARTON: We are being told that one of the big things about the central monitoring system is that it is going to be a tool against money laundering. Surely, with \$100 load-up limits, money laundering is just impractical, irrespective of whether there is a central monitoring system or not. The central monitoring system is being portrayed as this catch-all to stop this potential illegal activity, whether it is happening or not. But with a \$100 load-up limit, surely it is not practical anyway.

Mr Rattenbury: I think your point is that you feel the discussion paper overstates the value of a CMS when it comes to money laundering.

MR PARTON: Yes. Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: It is fair enough for you to make that observation, if that is how you see it. I do not think the government is suggesting that a CMS is predominantly about money laundering. I think it is identified as one of the potential benefits. But the primary reason the government has put forward a proposal for a centralised monitoring system, as I said earlier, is that, as the advice from BMM indicated to us, it is the most effective way, both technically and from a cost point of view, to bring in \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits. As you would know, that is contested by some venues, and that is the discussion we are having.

MR PARTON: Right. Okay. I can wind that discussion up. In regard to that broader discussion paper, surely the government has information on the percentage of individual spins in the ACT that are made at a level above \$5? So much of what we are doing here, in regard to the reduction of gambling harm, is to protect people who are spinning at above \$5 per bet. The government must know what percentage of spins that is—because I have got a fair idea, based on the conversations that I have had. Are you able to enlighten me on that?

Mr Rattenbury: I will see if Ms Chan, from the Gambling and Racing Commission, is able to assist with that, Mr Parton.

Ms Chan: We do have a range of information. I suppose with the money-laundering aspect there are a number of sorts of information that we look at. Our role related to money laundering would be to liaise with the appropriate regulatory bodies. It is something that we do have a close interest in, particularly with the casino part of its integrity program. It is our responsibility in that space to monitor it.

Money laundering more generally is something that is of interest to regulators across the country. You would be aware that there are some inquiries going on. It is something that is of interest to us and it is a space that we are watching closely. If there are any tools that help in the monitoring of that or the catching of that, that is obviously something we would be very interested in.

MR PARTON: All right. The question that we were actually on was: what percentage of individual spins in the ACT are made at a level above \$5? That is what we are

focusing on at this stage. I appreciate your answer to the money-laundering question, but I am just wondering whether there is anyone in the room who can provide information on that.

Mr Rattenbury: We will take that question on notice for you, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: All right.

MR CAIN: Back to EVs, Minister. They are becoming an increasing part of our market, of course. So what are you doing, as Minister for Consumer Affairs, to ensure stability of electricity supply and affordability for consumers with EVs and their bills at home?

Mr Rattenbury: Thanks, Mr Cain. We predominantly have responsibility for that in my space as minister for energy. I can talk about it at some length. Is there a particular element that you want to discuss? I do not want to answer a question that you do not want answered.

MR CAIN: No. I am happy for you to answer that question in your energy capacity.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes; sure. No problem. Across the board, the government is seeking to reduce the cost of energy for Canberra residents and also to ensure reliability. The ACT has an extremely reliable electricity supplier.

In my role at the national energy ministers meeting we are working with the other states and territories and the commonwealth government—now that the commonwealth government wants to work with us—on the reliability questions. That is a whole-of-national-electricity-market question.

On the cost side, the government has a range of programs around energy efficiency—for example, the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme and the Sustainable Household Scheme, as well as educational programs or information-sharing programs that are designed to help households to reduce their energy bills. What I can also tell you is that the ACT continues to have amongst the lowest electricity prices in Australia.

MR CAIN: With the 2035 target in consideration, how confident are you and have you done any modelling to test that households, with a predominance of EVs in our community, will be able to get the electricity that they require? And will businesses continue to be able to operate in the evening hours, in particular, when these EVs are most likely to be charged?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly, Mr Cain. The government has done modelling. You will have seen the position paper the government released about two weeks ago on our plan to electrify Canberra. Clearly, we have contemplated these questions. It is fair to say that there is significant work to be done in this space over the next 10 to 20 years. This will involve augmentation of the electricity network; it will involve continued energy efficiency efforts and it will involve the development of grid management technologies. What I mean by that is that there is significant discussion about how the system will manage the charging of vehicles, amongst other things, and manage the whole electricity supply so that we do not have everybody charging at once when they do not need to. That is the sort of work that is being developed extensively at the moment,

across the system.

MR CAIN: How would you get people to not charge at the one time? Have you got disincentives in mind or incentives to change that behaviour?

DR PATERSON: Chair, this is not actually relevant to this session.

Mr Rattenbury: I don't mind, Mr Cain, depending on how you want to go. The officials who work on the detail of this will appear with me, as energy minister, in a subsequent session. I am happy to keep chatting with you about it now, but I am at the committee's mercy on how far you want to go on this topic.

THE CHAIR: If you are happy to answer this question, by all means, go through. Then we will go on to the next substantive.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

DR PATERSON: It is not relevant.

Mr Rattenbury: I will give you a quick answer. The short answer, Mr Cain, is that there is actually not an answer to this question, exactly, at the moment. What people—and experts in the field—are talking about is that, potentially, over time, there will be a series of price-based incentives, as well as rule-based changes, to ensure the stability and reliability of the energy grid as we move to a more electrified system. That is the short answer.

MR CAIN: I will certainly keep an eye on that. Thank you, Chair.

MR PARTON: You have spoken, Minister, about the contention at the moment and the disagreement between you, as minister, and ClubsACT, representing the clubs, in regard to what it is going to cost to roll out this central monitoring system and other add-ons. Can I ask what consideration is being given to the infrastructure elements of introducing the government's preferred option, including the potential fibre optic cabling of venues to facilitate the operation of the CMS? I gather that it is one of the reasons why the clubs' figure is much higher than yours. Was the potential fibre optic cabling of venues taken into account?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Parton, I am not in a position to get down to that level of technical detail. What I can indicate to you is that this is the very reason that the government put a position on the table early. We were very up-front with the venues in saying, "This is the advice we have. We are now testing that with you and we would like to get your expert input into what you think of this." We have also invited clubs, if they have a better model, to come back to us with it.

MR PARTON: All right.

Mr Rattenbury: That is the point of the discussion that we are up to.

MR PARTON: All right. Can I ask, on a broader level then: how were the cost assumptions derived, with respect to the cost of machine replacement or upgrading?

They are clearly incorrect and I just want to know how they were arrived at.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Parton, I have explained this. They are available in the BMM report, which the government made public. We are not seeking in any way to be secretive about this. The government has been very transparent. You do not see many governments releasing a consulting report, with the detailed costing behind it, as part of a process like this. But I have. I have made it available to the clubs and they are now contesting that. I think that is a healthy way to develop good public policy.

MR PARTON: All right. Minister, in closing on that line of questioning, you indicated that machine manufacturers we not consulted at all about the cost elements of the government-preferred option. Given the technical nature, and given that they are the ones who are actually supplying clubs, would it not have been prudent for the consultant and/or the government to genuinely seek advice from machine manufacturers on the cost options? It appears to me as though most of the assumptions are incorrect.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Parton, you might want to talk to BMM about your views on their professional capability. You are welcome to do that. I think you mischaracterise the situation. The government sought an independent consultant to provide us with advice. They provided us with that advice. We formed an initial policy position, based on that advice, and then we put it out for consultation. The gaming machine companies were then involved in that consultation process. So they have had an opportunity.

I think it is also fair to observe that gaming machine companies have a somewhat vested interest, which is why the government sought to go to somebody like BMM, to try to get away from that vested interest component and seek to get the most independent advice that we could. That is not to say that the gaming machine manufacturers will not have their say. They have had it. Some of them have contributed, either directly through their own submissions to the government or they have supported ClubsACT and individual clubs to make their submissions. So they are having plenty of chance to have input.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question about the national online gaming laws. What is the ACT government doing in terms of advocating for any shift or change in that space?

Mr Rattenbury: The ACT government is part of the national partnership. I will ask Mr Ng to provide the details on that.

Mr Ng: I have seen and acknowledge the privilege statement. In 2018, Mr Braddock, the ACT signed up to the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering. That had a range of requirements, with the intention of having a consolidated and consistent set of regulatory settings across all of the online gaming operators across Australia. That is particularly important, given that the capacity for gaming activities that are generated out of other jurisdictions is going to be crossing paths with consumers in outside jurisdictions.

As part of that, the ACT introduced its first set of reforms in, I believe, 2019. There are a range of measures that remain on the work program of the consumer protection

framework. Some of them have been in the commonwealth space. One of those is the national self-exclusion register, the work on which is being led by the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

One of the more significant bits of work that has been happening in the recent past is the introduction of a requirement to produce activity statements. Activity statements are intended to outline the customer's betting activity and account transactions, including amounts spent, wins and losses, overall net win and loss for a specified period of the activity statement, opening and closing balances and the like.

That is kind of a flavour of what has been happening in the online gaming space. But, as I said, the ACT has implemented, along with other jurisdictions, the bulk of the consistent reforms that are intended by the consumer protection framework.

MR BRADDOCK: Thinking about the change to the betting operations tax, has there been any analysis or modelling done of how that might impact gaming, and particularly gambling harm here in the ACT?

Mr Ng: Yes. The betting operations tax is led by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. With respect to the implications for online gaming policy, we would reflect that there has been an observation that over the last two years there has been an increase in online gaming activity. The government's current disposition is to make good on the remaining bits in the work program of the online consumer protection framework.

MR BRADDOCK: I am asking the question in terms of whether any assessment has been done as to what that would do in terms of gambling harm. Can we demonstrate that the increase from 15 to 20 per cent will actually reduce gambling harm in the ACT?

Mr Ng: No, I do not think so, Mr Braddock. Is your question about what the correlation is between the proposed reforms and—

MR BRADDOCK: Yes, exactly; in terms of any analysis, any modelling and any evaluation that might indicate that, through the increase to 20 per cent, we anticipate seeing a decrease in gambling harm in the ACT.

Mr Ng: I would have to take that question on notice, Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

DR PATERSON: My substantive is in respect of reporting. In the gaming and racing part of the budget, at page 101 of budget statements B, strategic objective No 1 is to take meaningful action to prevent gambling harm. Basically, the two pages are just a reiteration of the research on this that was conducted in 2019, including the strategic indicator.

With respect to output class 1, and the output accountability indicator on gambling regulation and harm minimisation, three out of the five accountability indicators are the level of helpfulness, the community's satisfaction with the commission and customer satisfaction with the commission. There appears to be very little depth in comparison

to other areas of the budget in terms of strategic objectives or meeting strategic objectives on a yearly basis. These appear to be every five years, and there is no justification for the objective—the half a per cent reduction in gambling harm, which is what it looks like in this graph. Are there ways that we can better report how we are minimising harm and being proactive about this in the ACT, strategically?

MR RATTENBURY: I am happy to consider that.

MR PARTON: I want to ask about this push towards the legislative change in the clubs space regarding a central monitoring system, \$5 bet limits and \$100 load-up limits. Minister, have there been any estimated impacts on employment within the licensed club industry arising from those proposed reforms? I ask specifically with a view to clause 7 of section E of the parliamentary agreement, which states:

Provide a just transition for workers in the community clubs and gambling industry by: ensuring that new or transferred employment is on permanent and secure terms; providing support and retraining for employment in new jobs of their choosing; and ensuring worker entitlements are secure in business transfer or winding up.

Is it reasonable to assume, with that quote in mind, that the proposed reforms were envisaged to impact significantly on employment within the sector?

Mr Rattenbury: No, Mr Parton. That is certainly not the intent of the reforms. The reforms come very much from the gambling harm minimisation point of view.

MR PARTON: Why is that big chunk in the power-sharing agreement? Why is it there?

Mr Rattenbury: Because this government is very conscious of ensuring there is a just transition when sectors are reformed, whether it is climate change or whether it is potentially significant reform in the gambling sector. The intent is to make sure that workers are not simply left behind.

MR PARTON: You want businesses to wind up but not with this particular mechanism. It says here that “worker entitlements are secure in business transfer or winding up”. There is talk in this clause, clause 7 of section E of the parliamentary agreement, about workers moving away from their employment in the clubs industry and about businesses winding up. It is pretty clear that, at the core of this parliamentary agreement when it comes to clubs, that is the end point, isn’t it?

Mr Rattenbury: No, that is certainly not the intent. That part of the agreement might have been better written, but the intent of the point we are trying to make there—and I was in the room when it was negotiated, so I can tell you what the intent was—is to make sure that, where there are changes in the sector—we also know, and you know it as well, that the clubs sector in some areas is having its own set of challenges outside those reforms—workers are protected. I do not see a causal link between reform in that sector and that clause.

MR PARTON: The first part of the question probably got lost in the rest of it. Have there been any estimated impacts on employment within the club sector arising from the proposed reforms?

Mr Rattenbury: Specifically from the \$5 bet limits and load-up limits?

MR PARTON: And the central monitoring system—the whole shebang.

Mr Rattenbury: There is no anticipated significant impact. Certainly, in the preliminary conversations I have had with the venues, they have not indicated an expectation of significant employment change.

MR PARTON: Really? That is not the feedback that I have got, Mr Rattenbury.

Mr Rattenbury: Okay. I have not read all of the submissions yet. I am still working my way through them. If it is in there, it may be something that I have not got to.

MR PARTON: Again I would point you to that quote directly from the executive summary of the ClubsACT response, which says that this approach will have an immediate direct impact on the viability of clubs, and that venues will close.

Mr Rattenbury: It is premised on a number of assumptions. Their assumption is \$70 million up-front spent next year. That is the worst-case scenario which the clubs are concerned about. That scenario is the consequence that they fear. I have been very clear with the clubs that that is not the government's intended outcome. We want the harm minimisation results, but we also want the clubs to be ongoing private entities, and we will work with them to make sure this is an orderly transition that does not produce the outcome in the quote you have used.

MR CAIN: Going back to the EV area, the government, Minister, as you would be aware, has secured contracts with JOLT EV networks and energy to provide EV charging stations, with construction beginning this year. Could you explain the term of these contracts, and are they able to be provided?

THE CHAIR: I will clarify this with the minister, if I can. Does this fall under the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE CHAIR: The question is relevant.

Mr Rattenbury: To be clear, I am appearing today as the Minister for Gaming and Minister for Consumer Affairs. That area is a direct responsibility in my role as minister for energy and emission reduction, which sits under EPSDD. I am very happy to come back to it in a later session.

MR CAIN: I am happy for you to answer it now, if you are willing to.

DR PATERSON: But it is not relevant to this part of the inquiry.

Mr Rattenbury: I am very happy to talk about it but it is not in today's—

MR CAIN: When do you suggest?

Mr Rattenbury: It would be in EPSDD, in my role as minister for energy and emissions reduction.

THE CHAIR: Can I suggest that you move those questions to that hearing, Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: That will be one less question I could ask, in that case.

Mr Rattenbury: I will be prepared for that question, Mr Cain, in that session. We will be organised for you.

MR CAIN: I will change it a little bit, anyway.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton, would you like to ask a substantive?

MR PARTON: I feel that the remaining questions that I have are of a highly technical nature. I have probably got enough from the live hearing in this space, so I will submit these on notice. It would not be beneficial; I would just be wasting the committee's time, and it is the last thing I want to do.

THE CHAIR: Mr Braddock, on a substantive?

MR BRADDOCK: I allocate my substantive to Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: My question is in relation to self-exclusion. Again, referring to some questions on notice that were reported back, the number of deeds of self-exclusion from the pre-COVID year 2018-19 to the post-COVID year has reduced quite significantly. The number of deeds revoked has also decreased by about 25 per cent. I am interested to know whether there has been any consideration of the fact that people are excluding less, potentially, and revoking deeds at a greater rate than used to be the case.

Ms Chan: Thank you for the question. With the number of exclusions and the number of revocations, the raw number itself is not necessarily an indication. As I said previously, if a person excludes more frequently, it might be working for them. If they exclude less frequently, it might also be working for them. It is hard to draw a conclusion from the raw data itself.

I do know that, over the last couple of years, each year has had a period of shutdown where the gambling venues were not operating. The self-exclusion scheme that we operate relates to terrestrial gambling—in person at a venue—as opposed to the online gambling that is part of the national consumer protection framework. If the gambling venues here were not operating, there is perhaps a reduced demand for some people to go into the self-exclusion scheme. I do caution about just using the raw numbers to form a conclusion about the success or otherwise of the scheme. It needs a bit more analysis than that.

DR PATERSON: Will the government do more analysis of those figures? Again they seem to just sit there and no-one does anything with them.

Ms Chan: As I said we do have better data now through the gamblers exclusion

database. There is also some work running through the ministerial advisory committee to look at self-exclusion. That is something we are looking at.

DR PATERSON: The other issue that came through this data—and I have actually asked clubs about this, and they have almost exactly the same figures—is in terms of males with 130 deeds of exclusion and females with 33 per cent. All of the research says it is normally around fifty-fifty. Is there something going on in the ACT that means females are not excluding at the same rate that males are?

Ms Chan: That is something we will need to look at. Recently we have been strengthening our partnerships with the community support sector. We have had a very strong relationship with the Gambling Support Service for many years, but in the last month we have initiated a gambling harm community of practice. Twenty-two organisations came to that session, and we are hoping to grow it further. We are hoping to increase our reach through people who might be presenting for, say, alcohol and other drugs, mental health or other comorbidities. We can work with those organisations to help to understand what gambling harm can look like—help them to understand where they could be referred to. We are hoping that we will increase the reach and information flow to those people. In terms of that data, that is something we need to look at.

DR PATERSON: In the parliamentary and governing agreement, one of the things that is there is “support clubs to become heat and smoke refuges for local communities”. This has been coming up in my discussions with the community sector and with clubs. Where are things at with progressing this work and are there issues that are being raised? For example, I have had issues raised with me around encouraging people to attend clubs that have active, running poker machines and bars open in times of high stress like bushfires.

Mr Rattenbury: There are two elements to that question. Let me start by outlining what is happening. In May this year, members of the ministerial advisory council endorsed terms of reference for the establishment of a heat and smoke refuge working group, as a subcommittee of the ministerial advisory council. Basically, we set it up to have a group go away and think through a lot of the questions involved. The working group’s first meeting was held on 20 July this year. In terms of what is happening, that work is now underway, and the detailed development of that proposal will be taken forward by that group.

Going to the second half of your question, regarding issues that have been raised, the intent of the policy is mindful of the potential threat of natural disasters to our city. It is very much driven by the smoke experience of the summer of 2019-20. I am conscious that the clubs provide large venues close to the community where people can seek refuge. I am mindful of the fact that heatwaves are the single largest source of deaths by natural disaster in Australia. Many old people, particularly, sit in homes that are not air conditioned. The government does not have enough venues to accommodate all of these people, so clubs make sense as a venue where people feel safe, they have good air-conditioning systems and potentially upgraded filtration for smoke. There is a logic to using those venues.

In terms of your question as to whether concerns have been raised, yes—exactly the one you described, of pushing people towards venues that have gaming and alcohol.

That is the work that the group is doing. Part of their terms of reference is to identify how we can make use of those venues whilst mitigating the risk of gambling harm while people are there. People who go there will potentially be stressed, so there is safety in a venue that they feel safe in and familiar with. There is also the downside of that stress and how people might react. That is the work that the working group is doing to think through those issues.

There are members of the working group from both club venues and the harm minimisation groups, so I am sure those issues will be well contested in that working group.

DR PATERSON: When will that working group report back to the ministerial council?

Mr Rattenbury: We expect them to report back at the end of next year, in about 15 months time.

MR CAIN: Minister, under budget statements D, the JACS budget statement, I cannot find reference to what appears to be within your portfolio responsibilities: fair trading, Australian consumer law, fuel prices, licensing of motor vehicle repairers, retirement villages, eco-labelling, pawnbrokers, motor vehicle dealers, and a few others. I am unable to locate any budgetary initiative or measure with respect to those areas.

Mr Rattenbury: Those areas are covered in two parts of the appropriation, Mr Cain. The policy side of it sits with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. They develop a lot of policies in that area, so the appropriation for those areas is covered in that part of the budget. Access Canberra has a lot of the regulatory enforcement side of that work, so that part of the appropriation is covered there. I think that answers your question.

MR CAIN: Budgetary wise, you are saying there is no recognition in the budget for the policy work that is done in these areas?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I am saying that the policy work is embedded in the appropriations for those two agencies.

MR CAIN: I will do some thinking about that; thank you.

DR PATERSON: I have a question regarding the sale of the Canberra casino; there was a new operator.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

DR PATERSON: Are you able to speak to who that new operator is and the process that has been gone through?

Mr Rattenbury: Ms Chan can provide the details of that process.

Ms Chan: There is a process where probity checks are done. I am not quite sure what information you are after. With this particular sale, it is not the casino per se that is for sale; it is a share transfer in one of the upstream companies. It is not that the casino has

been sold; it is that the company that owns the company that owns the casino is having a share transfer. But there are probity checks that we are required to do, and we will be doing those.

DR PATERSON: It was raised with me the other day that the company that will come in as the operator or whose shares are transferred might be looking to negotiate poker machines in the casino. Is that something that has been discussed?

Ms Chan: That has not been discussed with us. The probity checks that we will do look into the eligibility of the key personnel in the company—any bankruptcies and that kind of thing. Those are the kinds of checks that we will be conducting.

Mr Rattenbury: On the issue of poker machines in the casino, that is specifically set out in the legislation. I cannot remember the name of the act; someone might help me in a second. There are very specific conditions under which the casino can hold poker machine authorisations. That specifically requires that the casino would have a maximum bet of \$2 on any machines in the casino, and they would have a mandatory precommitment system in place prior to the introduction of poker machines into the casino. Those are basically the policy settings that were put in place in legislation in about 2017 or 2018.

DR PATERSON: Has any consideration been given to that in respect of the central monitoring system? If the casino applied for poker machines, would they also be included in that central monitoring system?

Mr Rattenbury: There would need to be some work done there. If the casino went down that path, depending on the timing, as we work through the other reform, we would need to make sure that there was consistency in some form or another. In other jurisdictions the casinos tend to have their own monitoring systems tied to their specific legislation. It is an area that we would need to work through if the casino went down the path of having poker machines.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you, Mr Rattenbury, and all of your officials for attending today. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice, would they please provide answers to the committee secretary within five working days. Thank you very much.

Appearances:

Stephen-Smith, Ms Rachel, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs,
Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health

Community Services Directorate

Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Deputy Director-General, Reform

Saballa, Ms Melanie, Executive Branch Manager, Next Steps—Reform and Strategy
Implementation

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's estimates hearing. The committee would like to welcome and thank Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith and officials for attending today. Ms Stephen-Smith is attending in her capacity as Minister for Families and Community Services; is that correct?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is my understanding.

THE CHAIR: Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live.

When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses could use the words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice in the transcript. Could I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege? I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is in front of you. When you speak, could you please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

As we are not inviting opening statements, we might go straight to questions. My question is on the Children and Young People Act. Minister, on page 26 of budget statements G, there is a technical adjustment of \$70,000 to modernise the Children and Young People Act 2008. It was shifted from last financial year to this one. Was any work done on this project during the last financial year? If so, what; and what are the expected total costs of this project?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I will hand over to Jacinta Evans, who is online, to talk about this. Yes, work is underway. It was funded in the previous budget, the 2021-22 budget, to the best of my recollection.

Ms Evans: Thank you for the question. I acknowledge the privilege statement. I can confirm, as the minister said, that the work is ongoing around modernising the Children and Young People Act. The funding for this piece of work covers some co-design work, and some consideration across both community and government about what the implications of this large piece of legislation will be, in order to enable it to become a modern and agile piece of legislation.

We have continued to work on it. Most of the work in the last financial year was within government, rather than across into the community. That was around the kind of consultation that we need to do on any change to legislation. That includes with community partners, and partners such as the Human Rights Commission. We will continue to do that work in a series of smaller projects, as well as broadly thinking about modernising the act, which we have already commenced, and some funding has gone towards that. That includes things like work on the child placement principle and a piece of work around an external merits review of child protection decisions.

THE CHAIR: In terms of your revision of the act, when can we expect to see these changes? Will it be part of one bill, or will it be part of many?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Our expectation is that there will probably be two tranches, maybe more. It is likely that there will be an early tranche of legislation that, as Ms Evans touched on, will cover better implementation in the legislation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle and embedding that in legislation in a clearer way. There is also the external merits review process, which I know has been a long time coming. The final round of consultation on that is underway at the moment.

Ms Evans: In the first tranche we would be considering information sharing, which is a really important part of how we manage child protection matters. Also, there will be some technical adjustments around the child death review parts of the act. We will then move to the second tranche, which will include pieces that we are currently consulting on.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The information-sharing part of that reflects the Legislative Assembly inquiry and some of the things that came out of that, as well as some things that are held over from the Glanfield review, and feedback from staff and consumers—people who are involved in the system—around information sharing.

MRS KIKKERT: Once you have finalised certain policies to be implemented in the Children and Young People Act, will you then outsource to have those policies implemented into the act?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not quite sure that I understand your question.

MRS KIKKERT: In terms of an external merits review, I understand that an outsourced person is coming in to CYPS to implement that into the act. Will the rest of the amendments to the Children and Young People Act be outsourced?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Are you referring to the policy work being done by a third party? We have some consultants working with CSD on developing this policy and undertaking some consultations to support some of these things. I forgot to mention earlier the charter of rights for parents and families that we are committed to. That work will go out for public consultation shortly. Part of that consideration will be about embedding that in the act, and how we do that. That is reflected in the parliamentary and governing agreement. Again, I would expect that there is a mix of consultants and internal staff who will do that consultation and policy development work.

In terms of actually delivering out of home care services that are broadly under the act,

again, there is a mix of internal and contracted service providers to deliver the range of services that sit under the Children and Young People Act.

MR BRADDOCK: I am interested in the Next Steps for Our Kids strategy, in terms of the accountability measures. I am hoping to get some more detail than what was included in the report evaluation about what they will look like and how we plan to achieve those measures.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will ask Ms Sabellico to answer that question.

Ms Sabellico: I have also read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I will also ask my colleague Melanie Saballa to add to my statement. With the Next Steps reform work that we have undertaken, we have committed to looking at establishing a performance management framework that will look across the service system—both government and non-government services. We are keen to look at defining where all of the accountabilities sit across the system and how we account for those in the performance monitoring framework. What would be the indicators that we need to report on in order to be able to demonstrate that we are achieving against those accountabilities?

We have done some thinking on that and some consideration has been given to what could be in there, but we will continue now to co-design this with the sector and with government. It will also need to include people like Health and Education, who have a level of responsibility to account for services for children and young people in the system. We expect that that will then form the basis of the contracts that we have with our community partner organisations.

For ourselves, we will look to define our accountability indicators, going forward. We will need to look at reviewing those, as part of what we need to achieve, going forward.

MR BRADDOCK: Will you have that internal accountability tracking to whichever part of government it would be?

Ms Sabellico: Yes.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question in terms of the time frames when we can expect that accountability framework to be available for us to see.

Ms Sabellico: We will be undertaking the co-design work over the next nine to 10 months. We hope to have the first draft in place and ready for the contracting round of the other services that will look at contracting under Next Steps, which will start from 1 July next year. We will continue to develop it as we go. We do not want to design something that is set for the whole of the eight years. We want to continue to look at what the data tells us on an ongoing basis and how we refine and fix any issues that are creating barriers or where we are seeing success, so that we can invest more in areas that we know are working and fix those that we can see, through the data, are not working.

Ms Stephen-Smith: In relation to the performance management framework, this is really about the outcomes for children and young people, and families in the system, and how we manage the delivery of child protection in out of home care services.

We will, of course, also be developing and co-designing the action plans to deliver the policy side. We will report on the delivery of the policy changes that we are making, as well. I regularly report in relation to A Step Up for Our Kids. I expect that I will report regularly to the Legislative Assembly about the implementation of Next Steps for Our Kids. We will also have a ministerial council—however named; we have called it that for convenience—that will include stakeholder partners, non-government partners, as part of that. That will also be holding us to account for the delivery of the various policy elements.

There is the accountability for the delivery of services and the outcomes that that achieves, and there is also the accountability for the continuous improvement in the policy and the various elements that are outlined in Next Steps.

MR BRADDOCK: It is also about the framework and mapping all of those accountability things in order to achieve what we want to do. Thank you.

DR PATERSON: In terms of the strategy, it is described as a broadening of reach of reform in comparison to previous strategies. What does this broader view encompass?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thanks, Dr Paterson. The Step Up for Our Kids was really focused on out of home care, and it was called an out of home care strategy. We very deliberately titled this “a strategy for strengthening families and keeping children and young people safe”. It goes back to earlier support, early intervention for families. We have heard that families do not like the word “intervention”, and they prefer to talk about the support that they need before they become engaged in the child protection system.

But also, a real focus through this strategy—and it is the fifth domain—is partnering with the community. So we are working with our non-government service providers, including through the CYFSP—that is the Child, Youth and Family Services Program, or support program; I can never remember what the acronym stands for—to ensure that we have a continuum of support for families and for children and young people and that we are engaging with those non-government partners.

One of the really strong pieces of feedback that we heard through the development of the strategy was that people see child protection as a bit of a black box, and there is not a strong shared framework for risk assessment and understanding who is carrying the responsibility for what in relation to the families that come into contact with the system. Often, they are in contact with a lot of different organisations and parts of the system, so it is also broadening out the lens from just being about out of home care and children and families who are engaged in the system, to being about those who might touch the system or might, in fact, be getting earlier support, and how that whole continuum works together.

DR PATERSON: Okay. Minister, in the budget there has been an alteration to the calculation for community sector indexation. This has led to an increase in funding for community sector organisations, representing \$9 million, I think, over the next four years. It is on page 133. I am just wondering if you can explain a bit of the history there and why this has come to be?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Probably in 2020, when Ms Orr was the Minister for Community Services, she commissioned some work on the true cost of delivering community services—services delivered by non-government organisations—and how we can improve the funding for them and how we can better understand the true cost of delivering those services, and what we need to do to ensure that we can fund those appropriately, both in terms of their cost base and also in terms of the growth in demand that they are seeing.

So the *Counting the Costs* report was delivered, and we are working through responding to that report in full. One of the key areas of concern was whether the indexation under the community sector indexation calculation was sufficient. That index—and it is just one of the standard indexes that Treasury uses—was based on 80 per cent wage price index, 20 per cent consumer price index.

We had made an adjustment in the previous year, in 2021-22, to reflect a minimum wage increase of 2.5 per cent, which, at the time, seemed a pretty good minimum wage increase, and award wage increase, rather than WPI, which was lower. We are considering how that indexation arrangement will work, going forward; but, given the real fluctuation at the moment in wages and costs and everything, we have made a single-year decision, again, to replace the wage price index element of that with the award wage indexation, which is 4.6 per cent. So that and then Treasury's estimate of CPI is combined to get the new indexation for this year. We will continue to work with the sector to look at what a longer-term arrangement will be for indexation, as well as working through the other recommendations of the *Counting the Costs* report.

MR BRADDOCK: I really applaud that approach—I cannot say that enough—but I am also interested in the other recommendations that came out of the *Counting the Costs* report. I would be interested to hear what the government is doing in terms of progressing those particular recommendations.

Ms Rule: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. We are currently running a process across government because you will appreciate that the *Counting the Costs* report covers a lot of directorates. We are working with colleagues across government to develop the rest of the government's response so that it is whole-of-government, considered advice about how we approach the other recommendations.

So, whilst one part of the report has been dealt with, the remainder of the recommendations are going through a process. We expect to take a whole-of-government view to cabinet towards the end of this calendar year for government to consider. We thought, as the minister said, it was important to deal with the wages issue first and then to take the time to consider more fully the implementation of the broader report, particularly given the work that is underway on commissioning across directorates and other factors that are impacting the sector. Towards the end of the year I expect that we will have a fuller response to the other recommendations.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

MRS KIKKERT: Delivering the Next Steps for Our Kids is listed as a priority on page 5 of budget statements G. Minister, Next Steps promises, on page 16, to provide

clarity and accountability for foster carers, but I have heard from foster carers that, outside of a promised charter of rights, the document is unclear and lacks specifics. For example, will this new strategy address the issue of foster carers not receiving important information about, or make for records for, the children who are coming into their care?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thank you, Mrs Kikkert. I think it is a really fundamental element of the Next Steps strategy that everybody who is engaged in the system is respected and that the system works restoratively—and that includes with carers. There definitely is a focus on ensuring that carers get the information and support that they need for the wellbeing of the children and young people who are in their care.

In fact, that is a focus of the strategy. We cannot put every detail of everything that we are going to do into a document of this size. Actually, a lot of work went into trying to focus in on what it was that we were trying to achieve. That is given through the guiding principles, the vision and the domains. But certainly, the charter of rights for carers was a specific recognition of what we had heard from carers—that they often do not feel respected in the way that they should. They do not feel that their voices are heard on decisions that are made about the children and young people in their care, when they have expertise about those children and young people. We have absolutely heard that and have reflected that in the strategy. As I said earlier, the next step of that work is to co-design and develop an action plan to implement.

We have six domains, each of which has three priority initiatives under it, but we know that there are a range of other specific actions that need to be taken in order to give effect to the vision and the objectives of the Next Steps strategy. The kinds of things you are talking about in terms of specific information about children and young people will sit within that next phase of work. Ms Sabellico might want to expand on that. Of course, there will also be relevance in terms of the information-sharing changes to the Children and Young People Act; but the charter of rights, I think, will be key in changing the way that carers are seen and respected in the system.

Ms Sabellico: Further to that, Mrs Kikkert, what we will do in terms of looking at how to implement the strategy is to look at the systemic changes that we need to make, both in government and also with our contracted services, to give life to the requirements of what it means to fully support carers to better support the children and young people in their care. The information-sharing part is clearly one area that we need to improve. We need to understand and work with the carers around the level of information that we need to look at to support for each and every child—because it will be different for each and every child—and to look at the ways we change how we work with carers when they are getting new children and young people in their care, upfront.

So, what is the clear information that we will give for all children, and what is the extra information we need to consider and discuss, child by child, depending on circumstances? And what does that mean for their training and development plans? How do we also support them on an ongoing basis? Because, as we know, children and young people go through different transition points, where behaviours will escalate and change. We need to be able to understand that and work with carers and respect that they are in a position whereby they are working with the children day in and day out, and how we can better support some of those actions that occur.

MRS KIKKERT: Thank you very much for that. With all due respect, you have not answered my question. My specific question was whether foster carers receive medical information about the children who are entering into their care. I would assume that receiving medical information is a life-or-death situation, so that would be quite paramount information for foster carers to receive. Will they be receiving medical information on, say, a two-year-old who is coming into their care? They have no idea what the medical information is. How is a foster carer supposed to look after this two-year-old if they do not have any background information about this two-year-old? I think that is what the foster carers are specifically looking for.

Ms Rule: This goes to some of the work that we are doing around improving our case work and practice right now. It is an immediate issue, not just an issue driven by this Next Steps strategy. In fact, Ms Sabellico and I have just had a conversation about this, following some discussions with some carers who have had a difficult experience.

The intent is that we pass along information we have available to us at the time that we have it available. When a child comes into care, we will not necessarily have all of that medical information at hand, and there is some work that has to go into assembling that information and then providing it. We are doing some work to make sure that the guidance for our staff—the policy document—is really clear on gathering that information and sharing it with carers. So we heard that feedback, and I think it is a really important point.

MRS KIKKERT: That is great. However, the foster carers deserve to know where you are at in supplying the medical information.

Ms Rule: Yes.

MRS KIKKERT: And here they are—these foster carers in the middle of the night receive a two-year-old, and they have no idea of the background story about this two-year-old. So, it would be really respectful for the CYPS to actually tell the foster carer, “We don’t know their background history in terms of medical records. We are slowly gathering them together. As soon as we find out, we’ll let you know.” That is all they ask for—to be treated with respect.

Ms Rule: I agree; yes.

MRS KIKKERT: What you know is really important for them to know as well. Do not hold them in the dark.

Ms Rule: I agree. And that is where we are doing some work to look at the strengthening of the guidance to staff to make it clear that those communication channels are open and that we will tell them what we know when we know it.

MRS KIKKERT: I have two more supplementary questions, because they did not answer my first.

Ms Rule: Well, I think we did actually.

THE CHAIR: No; that is your substantive, and you can go onto a supplementary

question now.

MRS KIKKERT: In terms of decision-making made by CYPS for children to be removed to another place, I understand that the CYPS wants to have this family-led decision-making as part of their policy. Are foster carers included in this embedded family-led decision-making within CYPS? Would you consider foster carers as family members of, say, a foster care kid who has been in their care for, say, three or four years?

Ms Rule: Family-led decision-making is actually an arrangement that you look at doing with family at the point in time when you are having a look at whether or not the children and young people will come into care. It is a specific reference to work that you do with family, to look to sustain children with family.

MRS KIKKERT: Okay. However, what if that placement is renewed?

Ms Rule: If you are then looking at making a decision to bring a child into care, the carer should effectively also become part of the care team for that child, in order to be able to participate in the discussions and decision-making.

MRS KIKKERT: Okay, so you are saying that the foster carers should be included in that decision-making, in theory or in practice?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Mrs Kikkert, in the context of a care team, carers are part of those care teams. If I can point you to page 19 of the *Next Steps for Our Kids*, one of the specific things it says in relation to carers is “greater inclusion in shared decision-making”. We have absolutely heard from carers, as I said at the beginning of answering your first question, that carers have indicated that they do not feel heard and respected in decision-making.

MRS KIKKERT: Correct.

Ms Stephen-Smith: And this is something that we are working to address, both in terms of practice today and in terms of the implementation of the Next Steps and specific recognition of that issue in the Next Steps. There will, however, be circumstances where decisions will be made that carers do not agree with, just as there will be circumstances where decisions will be made that members of the birth family, whether they are carers or extended family, do not agree with.

This is the context in which child and youth protection decisions are made. Sometimes they are contentious and sometimes not everybody is going to agree that the right decision has been made. The really important thing in relation to our processes, and what we have heard from carers and from families, is that everybody needs to feel heard in those processes and understand how and why decisions have been made. We have absolutely heard that we need to improve the way that that occurs.

MRS KIKKERT: Will you guarantee that foster carers be included in family-led decision-making?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is not necessarily the family-led decision-making. It occurs at a

whole range of points in the process—in particular, when there is a consideration of children and young people at the edge of care; when there is consideration of whether they come into care; if they do, who they live with and, if they don't, what kinds of supports are required for the family to ensure that children can stay safe at home.

It may be that during that process a child is temporarily with an emergency foster carer, but it is the family who is making a decision about the future of that child or young person while they are in an emergency care placement, after emergency action is taken. That is a very different circumstance to a carer who has had a child or young person in their care for an extended period of time and the carer would be part of a care team. That is where we are saying that absolutely they should be included in that decision-making, their voices should be heard, and they should understand how and why decisions have been made.

THE CHAIR: I refer to the increasing cost of residential care. Table 19 in budget statements G, on pages 23 and 24, shows that, on average, out of home care days have increased seven per cent more than targeted and that the target for this year is 21 per cent above last year's target.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Sorry; which page are you looking at?

THE CHAIR: It is 23 and 24. The explanation given in footnote 2 involves the additional costs of residential care placement during the transition period of the Next Steps for Our Kids strategy, as well as the anticipated costs of high intensity residential care. Why is residential care costing more during the transition period? Is this a temporary cost increase or will it be permanent?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will hand over to Ms Sabellico in a moment. At the moment, Barnardos, as part of the ACT Together consortium, are delivering residential care. They have indicated that they do not want to do that in the longer term, and we have gone to market to identify a new residential care provider. As part of that, we have been very clear that we want a provider that can deliver therapeutic residential care, in line with models that are well established in other jurisdictions, to provide a truly therapeutic place for children and young people who live in residential care, who generally are amongst the most traumatised and complex children and young people in the out of home care system. Ultimately, delivering a more therapeutic model is probably going to cost more in the long term. But in that transition period there will also be a cost of transition.

Ms Sabellico: It will be a short-term cost because we will need to look at transitioning the young people and the services from one provider to another. That will take time because we will need to do that sort of consideration child by child, house by house. Currently, we are working to a time frame, but that will need to be negotiated between the current provider and new provider as well.

The costs associated with that have been worked out, based on what transfers out across a period of time, and then the transition will come to an end. In terms of some of the higher cost placements that you referred to, we have a number of placements where we have young people who have a need for significantly more service than standard residential care can provide, so that is the other aspect of the growth in the funding over

the past year.

THE CHAIR: So who is currently delivering residential care in the ACT? Are Barnardos taking a step back?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is primarily Barnardos, but we do have two other service providers who are currently delivering residential care in more bespoke models.

THE CHAIR: What is the expected demand for highly intensive residential care? You mentioned that briefly just a moment ago. What is the demand and who can provide that level of care?

Ms Sabellico: A proportion of all kids currently in residential care would have a need for what we call an intensive residential care placement. There are still some young people that would require more than that. When we are going out to tender for the new therapeutic residential care provider, we would expect that they would provide right across the continuum of need for kids in residential care, acknowledging that there will still be exceptional circumstances and that we need to budget for those, going forward.

THE CHAIR: Is residential care the best option for those individuals who need that level of care?

Ms Sabellico: It is a decision you take in order to look at giving an opportunity to support a young person, being able to provide them with more structure, more support and an ability to undertake programs that will hopefully decrease the level of behavioural risks that are inherent for that young person. Long-term residential care is probably more suitable to those that are at the older end—that is, 17 to 18, moving into supported independent living. For younger people you would expect that you would do very, very clear exit planning from residential care in order to look at the options for return to family, kin, or at least the structured, least restrictive sort of services like foster care as well. They are the other two aspects.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the other reason that we have used the residential care model recently is a balance of keeping siblings together when we have a large sibling group. You may not be able to find a foster carer or kinship carer who can take a large group of children. The siblings are family, and keeping that family unit together can be very important. There are a range of reasons why you might choose residential care; but, as Anne-Maree said, if that involves younger children you definitely want to look for a pathway to, preferably, kinship care or foster care or some other sustainable model. Residential care is not ideal—having paid staff who are on shift and coming and going. That is not an ideal circumstance, particularly for a young child.

THE CHAIR: With residential care and numerous young children in that same house, under that same care, how do you match them and ensure that the children that do go into this type of care will be able to get along and not destroy each other?

Ms Sabellico: It is a constant review of the provider and us looking at the young people that are coming into the system, looking at the matching. Currently, ACT Together have what they call an intake house, which allows them to provide emergency accommodation while they are looking to see what the best match and fit is across the

residential service.

There is constant review because things change, and kids do not get along; all those sorts of things. So there is a process of constantly reviewing which young people are together and for how long and what services can be afforded them while they are in there.

MS KIKKERT: When will the tender process go out for the new provider, instead of Barnardos? Barnardos is not doing it for the next year or the year after?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The tender has been out in the market. That closed a little time ago.

Ms Rule: The tender is under evaluation at the moment. The tender is closed and we are just considering the responses to the tender right now.

MS KIKKERT: How long will that take?

Ms Rule: That is a good question. We are in the middle of it, so I do not want to put a time frame on it. It is complex.

MS KIKKERT: How long have you had it for?

Ms Rule: Not very long. Ms Sabellico can give you the specific dates.

Ms Sabellico: It was open in the market for about eight weeks and we have been undertaking a really comprehensive evaluation over about the last four weeks, which has included a discussion with the providers to get further information to support their tenders.

MR BRADDOCK: I am interested in the commissioning for outcomes—how that is progressing, what feedback we might have received and any lessons learned from that exercise.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thank you, Mr Braddock. I just saw ACTCOSS's most recent newsletter, I think it was. They were expressing that they were happy about some of the outcomes that had been achieved through the peaks commissioning process in terms of embedding the short-term funding, project funding, that they had been receiving into base funding and getting more security of funding.

The approach is in relation to being very clear that we are looking at longer term funding arrangements. We are looking at moving away from the three-year funding cycle and moving away from a competitive, lowest cost kind of approach to value for money towards a much more collaborative approach, where we are working with current providers and other people who potentially have an interest in the system, to understand what it is that we actually need to procure for and then doing that in a more collaborative way.

I think that has been really welcomed. Certainly, from my perspective, in talking to non-government providers, some of the larger ones in particular have really embraced it. I think there are some providers, some non-government organisations, who are a bit

worried about the process. We are working to reassure them that this is a collaborative process of working together to understand both what is needed in the system and who is best placed to deliver that. Jacinta has put her camera on, so I might turn to her to tell you a little more about where we are at in the process.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Minister. I think it is probably important to know that we are taking a 10-year approach to commissioning because, both within government and within the community sector, we need time to consider and mature and grow our capability in this space. It is a really complex move from what, for some organisations, was funding that they were very confident in—and they knew exactly what program they were delivering—to a situation where we are asking them to engage with us on: “Is that program good but is there better? Are there are other ways that we can do things?” I think that we are rebuilding that road map.

An important piece of work that we are doing with our community sector colleagues at the moment is developing the next iteration of the road map. The first road map that we put forward was very much around when we were starting different pieces of work. We are now a little more able to enter into conversations with our sector colleagues about what else they need to know, going forward, for the next couple of years. We have invited aboard the community sector, and there is a sounding group that is listening to what it is hearing in the sector and giving us advice so that we can update that road map.

There are a couple of key pieces of commissioning that we have been moving through. You have already heard a fair bit about Next Steps and some of the work that is being done there, but it is very much an evolving space and we, along with our community sector colleagues, are learning as we go.

MR BRADDOCK: What were some of the worries that the smaller community providers were providing back to you, Minister?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think it is twofold. Any new process creates a level of uncertainty, so there is that. There is also their capacity to engage in the process—so if it is an iterative, co-designed process around the service system, how much time and effort will that take for them? The work that the team is doing is to make the process straightforward, simple and understandable and to reassure providers, as Ms Evans has said, that it is a long process and that everyone will have the opportunity to engage but we recognise that some will want to engage more than others.

MR BRADDOCK: Understood. I am interested in what were the lessons learned that were fed back, perhaps in that road map that Jacinta referred to. I am trying to understand what the feedback loop has been on that.

Ms Evans: Thank you for the question. There has been feedback around the demand on the sector broadly. COVID has been an incredibly difficult time for the community sector in terms of workload, so if we have expectations that they will be able to engage all the time on different pieces of consultation or giving us feedback that is a challenge in itself, and we do have to be respectful of the workload and the commitments that our sector colleagues have.

Other than that, most of it has been around people who are concerned about decisions

being made without full transparency or without us giving them the opportunity and the time to consider the implications and give us feedback. They are not saying that that has happened, but there is always anxiety when there is a big change, or something that can be perceived as change, and there is a worry that people might not be able to give their feedback in a timely way.

We have been addressing that through things like the road map, where we have made it really clear: “We will give you plenty of time, these are the time frames that we expect to be able to engage with you and we are welcoming that feedback as it comes through.” But the lessons learned so far have been, as I said, about us maturing and increasing capability.

DR PATERSON: A key message from the Next Steps strategy is that we need to acknowledge that children and young people who come into contact with the system often have experienced significant traumas in their life and also adverse life experiences, childhood experiences. The report, on page 32, highlights a plan to establish an intensive trauma recovery service for adolescents and young adults. I am wondering if you can detail what that unique assistance and service might look like.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thank you, Dr Paterson. This is something I am very keen to see get up and running. It is actually sitting in the mental health space, with Minister Davidson, at the moment. There has been quite a lot of work over the last 12 months on understanding the impact of trauma for children and young people, but I think also recognising that for a lot of the young people who are over the age of 12 there is often co-occurring trauma, mental health issues, potentially drug and alcohol issues, and sometimes engagement with the justice system. There are a range of things going on in these young peoples’ lives, so it is a more complex picture in some ways than for the younger children. That is sitting in the mental health space.

It was an ACT Labor election commitment, and Minister Davidson has been working on the design of that. I think it is fair to say that it has been a collaborative process between the Health Directorate and CSD on what we can learn from Melaleuca Place but also recognising that often these are young people with comorbidities.

DR PATERSON: Excellent. Thank you.

MRS KIKKERT: In terms of the family group conference, the government agreed to implement recommendation 4 of the Our Booris, Our Way review, which is universal access to family group conferencing as an essential step for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families engaging with or entering the child protection system.

Minister, since last year I have been trying to find out an exact percentage of Indigenous families who are being referred to a family group conference upon engaging with or entering the child protection system. To date, you have not been able to provide that information. All I know is that the Family Group Conferencing Strategic Plan 2021 lists the low FGC referral rate as a current challenge. Minister, could you provide the exact number of families that should have been referred under this policy and what percentage have been referred?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will hand over to Ms Sabellico. As we have indicated in

responses to questions from you, there is a Family Group Conferencing Advisory Committee and there is a piece of work going on at the moment in relation to both support for those referrals from staff—and there is a lot of training that occurs—but also raising awareness in the community so that we are getting the push and pull factors in relation to more families undertaking family group conferencing. I will hand over to Anne-Maree for further detail.

Ms Sabellico: Thank you, Minister. Mrs Kikkert, I can give you the actual details of how many families have been referred. We have had 57 families referred, involving 127 children.

MRS KIKKERT: So 57 families have been referred? And that is what—

Ms Sabellico: And 127 children.

MRS KIKKERT: Sorry; say that again.

THE CHAIR: 127 children.

Ms Sabellico: 57 families, involving 127 children.

MRS KIKKERT: What percentage is that now?

Ms Sabellico: I do not have that figure. I have just got the details of the actual numbers.

MRS KIKKERT: Why do you not have that figure, may I ask?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We can take that question on notice, Mrs Kikkert.

MRS KIKKERT: I have asked that question on notice, but you have not been able to answer it.

THE CHAIR: We will just see if they can come back with it now.

MRS KIKKERT: They might change their mind. I think she has some more information.

Ms Sabellico: I was just going to say that, of those 127 children, 77 children have not subsequently entered care following a family group conference. For the remaining 50 we are still working with those families in terms of looking at the best care arrangements or changes to the arrangements.

MRS KIKKERT: Thank you. Universal referral is the current policy. Can the minister explain why there is or has been a low referral rate in practice?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think Ms Sabellico will be better placed to explain that than I am.

Ms Sabellico: Yes. There are a number of factors that go into consideration of the appropriateness of referral to the family group conferencing pilot, or the program as it is now. It is a voluntary process, so you do need to get the consent of the person to

therefore make the referral as well, so that is part of the reason that not all might go through to referral.

We have got a working group together that is specifically having a look at strategies to promote referrals and family acceptance. They are looking at it from three different perspectives. The first is the people: how do we make sure that all of the CYPS staff have all of the information they need and an understanding of the program in order to promote referrals to their families, as well as having a look at how we also include ACT Together in that process so that when a situation calls for it they can also refer in.

We are looking at processes, so we have fortnightly drop-in consults so that staff can go to somebody who is a specialist in family group conferencing to talk about particular families and ways in which we might be able to engage differently to get them to agree and consent to the process, going forward. And then there is technology: looking at how we flag in our system those cases that we know should be considered for family group conference, to be able to identify those and work with the case workers more directly as well.

That committee has a member of the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee on it. The one issue at the moment that we are seeing is a change to the number of referrals, but it is the number of conversions of those referrals into family group conference which is their next focus area.

MRS KIKKERT: You said that people who are within the system or may be in the system need to consent to be referred. Are CYPS the facilitators of those referrals for family group conferencing?

Ms Sabellico: At this stage they are, but we are looking at now opening that up in order to get a greater level of discussion with those that are not necessarily engaging or giving consent to go forward. We are looking at what our options are.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The one other thing I would add is that we are also looking at where family group conferencing can be used in other circumstances. For example, if restoration to family or to kin is being considered, we are looking at whether a family group conference is an appropriate way for the family to get together to talk about how that would work, if a child or young person is restored to their family.

DR PATERSON: I am wondering if you could speak to the intersection of the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations and the implementation of them and the development of the Next Steps strategy?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. It was one of those difficult things, as we were working through how we wrote up Next Steps, not only to recognise that Our Booris, Our Way has its own implementation oversight committee and its own process; it was also really important that we embedded our commitment to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people within the Next Steps strategy. Hence, implementing Our Booris, Our Way is the first domain of the strategy, but it is also recognised that it is being implemented in a very specific way, with its implementation oversight committee, and that there are other things in Next Steps that are looking towards a more responsive and restorative practice.

If we had better restorative practice right across the system it would be better for all families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. That is not necessarily responding to a specific recommendation of the Our Booris, Our Way review, but it is recognising that if we implement the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review that will actually improve the system for all families, because people will start working differently. Also, if we implement the other elements of Next Steps that will improve the system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. So there is a crossover and a connection, but there is also a very specific program of work around the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations.

DR PATERSON: Are you able to speak to the importance of cultural safety in the implementation of the Next Steps strategy?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. It is a very strong focus. I will hand over to Melanie.

Ms Saballa: Thank you very much. I have read and I understand the privilege statement. As the minister was explaining, the Our Booris, Our Way report has a set of recommendations and there is an implementation oversight committee in place and regular updates, and progress is being charted and there are regular status reports.

What we sought to do in Next Steps for our Kids is look at how we embed cultural safety and improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and extended families in a way that is much more systemic. While the Our Booris, Our Way review and the report have recommendations about very specific things and whether they are statutory or practice based, they are about upskilling staff—there are a whole raft of things under Our Booris, Our Way.

What we have sought to do is really embed cultural safety in the way that we do our work. When I think about cultural safety—I share my view here—it is about the way that we do our work at all levels within government, but also with funded partners and together across sectors. It is about practice and it is about policy and structures and processes. It is also about the environments that our families come into, because my understanding of cultural safety is that it is not my determination of what looks culturally safe for a family. It is actually their experience of going into a service, whether it is the Child Development Service or a child and family centre or one of the services from our funded community partners; that they go in, they feel heard, staff are skilled in the way that they engage with them and there is a really strong focus on self-determination.

To summarise, this is the first of the domains. We have six domains within Next Steps for our Kids. The advice that we had from critical sector friends when we were drafting the strategy was that we really needed to be quite clear and candid about what our system challenges are that remain and we also needed to bring in what we had heard from our consultation last year. So this is the first of the domains and it really profiles the importance of this work. Thank you.

DR PATERSON: Thank you.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Children’s Day the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee stated that they are “tired and frustrated by the lack of progress and feel disappointed that 2.5 years after the final report only one recommendation of 28 in total has been fully implemented”.

They also wrote:

We know that systemic change takes time, but this has taken too long. We need radical change as a matter of urgency.

Minister, as the responsible minister implementing Our Booris, Our Way, what obstacles that the oversight committee are unaware of are causing the implementation of these reforms to drag on for years?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure that they are obstacles that the oversight committee is unaware of. I have met with the oversight committee a couple of times in recent months, most recently a couple of weeks ago, and I absolutely recognise their frustration. I think there have been some challenges in the way that the range of directorates who have responsibility for the recommendations—including CSD, which has primary responsibility—have been able to engage with the committee to explain some of the progress that has been made.

I think that more progress has been made than is really being understood. Having said that, I absolutely accept that there are things that have not been delivered in the way that the committee has expected them to be, and that either has not been very well communicated to the committee or progress has not been as quick as we would all have wanted it to be. I absolutely understand and respect the committee’s frustration.

I think that there are a number of recommendations that have been largely delivered that have not necessarily resulted in a visible and significant change in outcomes, in terms of numbers, that perhaps had been expected, or they still require ongoing implementation. There are a range of recommendations that are largely delivered but will require ongoing implementation to embed them. That is a conversation with the implementation oversight committee about when do we consider that the recommendation itself has been implemented and how do we oversight the ongoing implementation and embedding of the changes that they have recommended?

Particularly, a lot of the conversation has been about trying to get to the heart of the intent of the recommendations, rather than necessarily just the words. There has been, over time, a lot of backwards and forwards about what is being done and frustration from the committee that what is being done is not what they had intended or what they had expected or what is actually delivering change on the ground. Maybe Catherine will want to add to that. There is absolute commitment right across the leadership of CSD, and from me, that we are delivering and we will deliver these changes. There have been some steps taken just over the last few weeks to really reset that process.

Ms Rule: Thanks, Minister. I can’t speculate on what has gone before, but I am a bit less than a year into this job and getting Our Booris, Our Way implemented as it was intended, in conjunction with the government—and the broader reforms that we are doing in the child protection space—is absolutely one of our highest priorities.

Anne-Maree and I, and the Deputy Director-General, Jo Wood, spend a day a month with the Our Booris, Our Way implementation committee, going through the recommendations, reporting on our progress. Those are difficult conversations sometimes, but that is how seriously we are taking them—that we send me and the two deputies to those meetings every month.

I echo the minister's sentiment that we are absolutely keen to reset. We are taking some internal measures about improving the reporting so that it can be more transparent between us and the committee about what we think has been achieved. We are making sure that there are dedicated resources to monitor our progress and to be able to report that, and really making sure that it is on a much more robust footing than it may have been before. We are taking it very seriously. We are working really hard to get back on track and to work closely with the committee to implement the recommendations, to get the implementation to a point where we can all agree that they have been implemented as intended.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee insisted on the ability to make recommendations for improvement at any time through the review period, specifically so that “early recommendations be implemented immediately”. Not one of the early recommendations from 2018 has been fully implemented yet. Following up on your answer, there is a lack of communication between your government and the steering committee in the oversight of Our Booris, Our Way. Why is there a lack of communication between the two of you? And why can you not implement recommendations during the review period, as the Our Booris, Our Way committee has actually suggested?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I do not think it is a lack of communication. I think there have been a lot of iterations of different types of reporting, trying to get it right, trying to understand the information that is going to be helpful to the implementation oversight committee. There have been some challenges around changes of staffing in the secretariat and other areas. There have also been challenges around implementing for intent.

One of the things that has been a significant challenge is recommendation 1. As you say, that was a recommendation that was made in 2018. The initial view of the directorate was that it would be very difficult to implement that in the way that the Our Booris, Our Way review had specifically recommended that it be implemented. So there was an effort to try and implement something that met the intent, that tried to achieve the outcome that the Our Booris, Our Way committee were looking for, without doing it in the exact way that they had recommended. It is fair to say that they were frustrated about not doing it in the way that they had recommended, but also that the efforts that were made to deliver on the intent were not as successful as I think the directorate had hoped and intended.

There has been a lot of work on things like engaging SNAICC to work with CYPS to develop practice guidance, to do training for our staff, to ensure that staff are better trained in cultural awareness and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and trying to ensure that cases are allocated to staff that have had that training and that are culturally aware. But the processes that have been in place have not always delivered that outcome. That is the kind of thing that Ms Rule is talking about. When

we talk about a reset, it is acknowledging that, despite a lot of effort—and I have to say there has been a lot of effort—it has not achieved the outcomes that the committee was looking for or that CYPS and CSD were hoping would be achieved. It is a process of then saying, “Well, we tried to do that. We tried to meet the intent in a different way. It did not work. How are going to reset so that we can, in fact, meet the intent?”

Another of those early recommendations was the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner. That, as you would be aware, is now well on its way. It is funded. It was funded in this budget. It is the responsibility of Minister Cheyne, but that recommendation was held up by the human rights review, the review of the whole human rights oversight system. That was not in line with what the Our Booris, Our Way committee wanted, so it delayed the process.

Initially, when that decision was made—and we talked about this before—the rights protection review was scheduled to start in April 2019. It did not actually occur until 2020, because of a delay in another directorate. That then delayed the implementation of that recommendation. But I think we have demonstrated that we have every intention to implement that recommendation and it was actually a process issue that held that up. I absolutely recognise the frustration of the community around that.

MRS KIKKERT: In terms of the oversight committee recommendations, it sounds to me like the government does not agree with some of what they have recommended. Minister, were you saying that what they recommended is wrong and that you are right?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, I did not say that, Mrs Kikkert. I absolutely did not say that. What we have been trying to do the entire way through is to get to the intent of the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations. The government has agreed with those recommendations and we are endeavouring to deliver on those recommendations, and we are working with the implementation oversight committee to do that. So don't verbal me. That is not what I said.

MRS KIKKERT: We will go back to the *Hansard*. That is what you said.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No. What I said was that the directorate is endeavouring to meet the intent of the recommendations—

MRS KIKKERT: You did not like their recommendations. That is what you said. You did not like their recommendations.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No. That is not what I said, Mrs Kikkert.

MRS KIKKERT: We will go back to the *Hansard*.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Well, go back to the *Hansard* and look at it. It is not what I said.

MRS KIKKERT: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On that note, it is six o'clock. This has completed our second day of these anticipated estimates hearings.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I was really looking forward to referring something to Treasury. It will have to wait until tomorrow.

THE CHAIR: It certainly brings great pleasure to me and also the committee to adjourn for today. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Minister Stephen-Smith, and of course other witnesses that have appeared today, statutory office holders and all the other officials. If witnesses have taken a question on notice, would they please get those answers to the committee support office or committee secretary within five working days of receipt of the uncorrected proof. If members wish to lodge a question on notice, please get those to the committee support office or committee secretary within five working days of the hearing. We are now adjourned. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 6.00 pm.